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THE LIFE OF SAINT MARY MAGDALEN

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Brogi Photo.

ST. MARY MAGDALEN

After the painting by Perugino at Florence



Mona Lisa (detail)

After the painting by Leonardo da Vinci

THE LIFE OF SAINT MARY MAGDALEN

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN OF AN UNKNOWN FOURTEENTH CENTURY WRITER BY

VALENTINA HAWTREY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

VERNON LEE

[Cavalca]

61.5.80
15/2/04

JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD
LONDON & NEW YORK. MDCCCCIV

Printed by Ballantyne, Hanson & Co.
At the Ballantyne Press

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PREFACE

"Among the most remarkable of these" I wrote some ten years ago, speaking of the Italian devotional romances of the Middle Ages, "is the Life of the Magdalen, printed in certain editions of Frate Domenico Cavalca's early well-known charming translations of St. Jerome's Lives of the Saints. Who the author may be seems quite doubtful, though the familiar and popular style might suggest some small burgher turned Franciscan late in life. As the spiritual love lyrics of Jacopone stand to the *Canzonieri* of Dante and of Dante's circle of poets, so does this devout novel stand to Boccaccio's more serious tales, and even to his 'Fiammetta'; only, I think, that the relation of the two novelists is the reverse of that of the poets; for, with an infinitely ruder style the pseudo-Cavalca has also an infinitely finer psychological sense than Boccaccio. Indeed, this little novel ought to be reprinted, like 'Aucassin et Nicolette,' as one of the abso-

lutely satisfactory works, so few but so exquisite, of the Middle Ages.

"It is the story of the relations of Jesus with the family of Lazarus, whose sister Mary is here identified with the Magdalen; and it is, save for the account of the Passion which forms the nucleus, a perfect tissue of inventions. Indeed, the novelist explains very simply that he is narrating not how he knows of a certainty that things did happen, but how it pleases him to think that they might have happened. For the man puts his whole heart in the story, and alters, amplifies, explains away till his heart is satisfied. The Magdalen, for instance, was not at all the sort of woman that foolish people think. If she took to scandalous courses it was only from despair at being forsaken by her bridegroom, who left her on the wedding day to follow Christ to the desert, and who was no other than the Evangelist John. Moreover, let no vile imputations be put upon it; in those days, when everybody was so good and modest, it took very little indeed (in fact nothing which our wicked times would notice at all) to get a woman into disrepute. Judged by our low

fourteenth-century standard, this sinning Magdalen would have been only a little overcheerful, a little free, barely what in the fourteenth century is called (the mere notion would have horrified the house of Lazarus) *a trifle fast;* our unknown Franciscan—for I take him to be a Franciscan—insists very much on her having sung and whistled on the staircase, a thing no modest lady of Bethany would then have done, but which, my dear brethren, is after all . . .

"This sinful Magdalen, repenting of her sins, such as they are, is living with her sister Mary and her brother Lazarus; the whole little family bound to Jesus by the miracle which had brought Lazarus back to life. Jesus and His Mother are their guests during Passion week; and the awful tragedy of the world and of heaven passes, in the pseudo-Cavalca's narrative, across the narrow stage of that little burgher's house. As in the art of the fifteenth century, the chief emotional interest of the Passion is thrown, not on the Apostles, scarcely on Jesus, but upon the two female figures, facing each other as in some fresco of Perugino, the Magdalen and the Mother of Christ. Facing

one another, but how different: the pseudo-Cavalca's Magdalen has the terrific gesture of despair of one of those colossal women of Signorelli's, flung down, as a town by earthquake, at the foot of the cross. She was pardoned 'because she had loved much—*quia multo amavit.*' Our unknown Franciscan knew what *that* meant as well as his contemporary Dante, when Love showed him the vision of Beatrice's death. Never was there such heartbreaking as that of his heroine; she becomes, almost, the chief personage of the Passion; for she knows not merely all the martyrdom of the Beloved, feels all the agonies of His flesh and His spirit, but knows—how well!—that she has lost Him. Opposite this terrible convulsive Magdalen, sobbing, tearing her hair and rolling on the ground, is the other heartbroken woman, the Mother; but how different! She remains maternal through her grief, with motherly thoughtfulness for others; for to the real mother (how different in this to the lover!) there will always remain in the world some one to think of. She reins in her sorrow; when John at last hesitatingly suggests that they must not stay all night on Calvary, she

turns quietly homeward; and, once at home, tries to make the mourners eat, tries to eat with them, makes them take rest that dreadful night. For such a mother there shall not be mere bitterness in death; and here follows the pseudo-Cavalca's most beautiful and touching invention: the glorified Christ, returning from Limbo, takes the happy, delivered souls to visit His Mother.

"And Messer Giesù having tarried awhile with them in that place, said: 'Now let us go and make my mother happy, who with most gentle tears is calling upon me.' And they went forthwith, and came to the room where our Lady was praying, and with gentle tears asking God to give her back her son, saying it was to-day the third day. And as she stayed thus, Messer Giesù drew near to her on one side, and said: 'Peace and cheerfulness be with thee, Holy Mother.' And straightway she recognised the voice of her blessed son, and opened her eyes and beheld him thus glorious, and threw herself down wholly on the ground and worshipped him. And the Lord Jesus knelt himself down like her; and then they rose to their feet and embraced one another most

sweetly, and gave each other peace, and then went and sat together," while all the holy people from Limbo looked on in admiration, and knelt down one by one, first the Baptist, and Adam and Eve, and all the others, saluting the Mother of Christ, while the angels sang the end of all sorrows."

This account of the pseudo-Cavalca's "Life of the Magdalen" (in my second book on Renaissance matters) has had the good fortune of procuring for that charming mediæval romance a translator quite according to my own heart. And I have been happy and proud to ask Messrs. Smith & Elder for permission to reprint these pages by way of introduction to Miss Valentina Hawtrey's learned and skilful version. I have been asked, moreover, to "add a few words." But what about? At the time of writing that book I made such inquiries as I could about the probable authorship of this "Life of the Magdalen," the result being nothing. I did, at one time, know about the various manuscripts and a few details about the language, but all that, to my shame, is utterly gone and forgotten. What, then, about those "few words" which it seems

I had promised to add? I was puzzling this over a few days ago, when, oh joy, I came upon the very thing. At least I hope it is the very thing. It was in a box of old manuscripts. Though whether of the fourteenth century or of more recent date, and whether attributable to the pseudo-Cavalca or some (alas!) less rare and mysterious author, I will leave Miss Valentina Hawtrey, Mr. John Lane, and the benevolent reader to decide. The thing purports to be the explanation "by a pious Florentine gossip" of some well-known devotional picture of the late Middle Ages, and is headed "A Nativity":—

The silly folk do not at all understand about the birth of our Lord. They say that our Lord was born at Bethlehem, and because the inns were all full, owing to certain feasts kept by those Jews, in a stable. But I tell you this is an error, and due to little sense, for our Lord was indeed placed in a manger, because none of the hostelries would receive Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, but it took place differently.

For you must know that beyond Bethlehem, which is a big village, walled and moated, of

those parts, lies a hilly country, exceeding wild, and covered with dense woods of firs, pines, larches, beeches, and similar trees, which the people of Bethlehem cut down at times, going in bands, and burn to charcoal, packing it on mules to sell in the valley; or tie together whole trunks such as serve for beams, rafters, and masts, and float them down the rivers, which are many, and very rapid. In these mountains, then, in the thickest part of the woods, a certain man of the woodcutting trade bethought him to build him a house wherein to store the timber and live, himself and his family, when so it pleased him, and keep his beasts; and for this purpose he employed certain pillars and pieces of masonry that stood in the forest, being remains of a temple of the heathen, the which had long ceased to exist. And he cleared the wood round about, leaving only tree stumps and bushes; and close by in a ravine, between high fir-trees, ran a river, always full to the brim even in midsummer, owing to the melting snows, and of greenish waters, cold and rapid exceedingly; and around, up hill and down dale, stretched the wood of firs, larches, pines,

and other noble and useful trees, emitting a very pleasant and virtuous fragrance. The man thought to enjoy his house, and came with his family and servants, and horses and mules and oxen, which he had employed to carry down the timber and charcoal.

But scarcely were they settled than an earthquake rent the place, tearing wall from wall and pillar from pillar, and a voice was heard in the air crying: "Ecce domus domini dei." Whereupon they fled, astonished and in terror, and returned into the town. And no one of that man's family ventured henceforth to return to that wood, or to that house, save one called Hilarion, a poor lad and a servant, but of upright heart and faith in the Lord, which offered to go back and take his abode there, and cut down the trees and burn the charcoal for his master. So he went, being but a poor lad, and poorly clad in leathern tunic and coarse serge hood. And Hilarion took with him an ox and an ass, to load with charcoal and drive down to Bethlehem to his master.

And the first night that Hilarion slept in that house, which was fallen to ruin, only a piece of roof remaining which he thatched with

pine-branches, he heard voices singing in the air, as of children, both boys and maidens. But he closed his eyes and repeated a Paternoster and turned over and slept. And again, another night he heard voices, and knew the house to be haunted, and trembled. But being clean of heart he said two Aves and went to sleep. And once more did he hear the voices, and they were passing sweet, and with them came a fragrance as of crushed herbs, and many kinds of flowers, and frankincense and orris-root; and Hilarion shook, for he feared lest it be the heathen gods, Mercury, or Macomet, or Apollinis. But he said his prayer and slept.

But at length, one night, as Hilarion heard those songs as usual, he opened his eyes. And behold! the place was light, and a great staircase of light, like golden cobwebs, stretched up to heaven, and there were angels going about in numbers, coming and going, with locks like honeycomb and dresses, pink and green, and sky-blue and white, thickly embroidered with purest pearls, and wings as of butterflies and peacock's tails, with glories of solid gold about their head. And they went to and fro, carry-

ing garlands and strewing flowers, so that, although midwinter, it was like a garden in June, so sweet of roses, and lilies, and gilly-flowers. And the angels sang; and when they had finished their work, they said, "It is well," and departed, holding hands and flying into the sky above the fir-trees.

And Hilarion wondered greatly, and said five Paters and six Aves.

And the next day, as he was cutting a fir-tree in the wood, there met him among the rocks a man old, venerable, with a long grey beard and a solemn air. And he was clad in crimson, and under his arm he carried written books and a scourge. And Hilarion said: "Who art thou, for this forest is haunted by spirits, and I would know whether thou be of them or of men."

And the ancient made answer: "My name is Hieronymus. I am a wise man and a king. I have spent all my days learning the secrets of things. I know how the trees grow and waters run, and where treasure lies; and I can teach thee what the stars sing, and in what manner the ruby and emerald are smelted in the bowels of the earth; and I can chain the winds and

stop the sun, for I am wise above all men. But I seek one wiser than myself, and go through the woods in search of him, my master."

And Hilarion said: "Tarry thou here and thou shalt see, if I mistake not, him whom thou seekest."

So the old man, whose name was Hieronymus, tarried in the forest and built himself a hut of stones.

And the day after that, as Hilarion went forth to catch fish in the river, he met on the bank a lady, beautiful beyond compare, the which for all clothing wore only her own hair, golden and exceeding long.

And Hilarion asked:

"Who art thou, for this forest is haunted by spirits, and I would know whether thou art one of such, and of evil intent, as the demon Venus, or a woman like the mother who bare me."

And the lady answered:

"My name is Magdalen. I am a princess and a courtesan, and the fairest woman that ever be. All day the princes and kings of the earth have brought gifts to my house, and hung

wreaths on my roof, and strewed flowers in my yard; and the poets all day have sung to their lutes, and all have lain groaning at my gates at night; for I am beautiful beyond all creatures. But I seek one more beautiful than myself, and go searching my master by the lakes and the rivers."

And Hilarion made answer:

"Tarry thou here, and thou shalt see, if I mistake not, him whom thou seekest."

And the lady, whose name was Magdalen, tarried by the river and built herself a cabin of reeds and leaves. And that night was the longest and coldest of the winter. And Hilarion made for himself a bed of fern and hay in the stable of the ox and the ass; and lay close to them for warmth. And lo! in the middle of the night, the ass brayed and the ox bellowed, and Hilarion started up. And he saw the heavens open with a great brightness as of beaten and fretted gold, and angels coming and going, and holding each other by the hand, and wreathed in roses, and singing "Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis." And Hilarion wondered and said ten Paters and ten Aves.

And that day, towards noon, there came through the wood one bearing a staff, and leading a mule, on which was seated a woman that was near unto her hour and moaning piteously. And they were poor folk and travel-stained.

And the man said to Hilarion: "My name is Joseph. I am a carpenter from the city of Nazareth, and my wife is called Mary, and she is in travail. Suffer thou us to rest, and my wife to lie on the straw of the stable."

And Hilarion said: "You are welcome. Benedictus qui venit in nomine domini," and Hilarion laid down more fern and hay, and gave provender to the mule. And the woman's hour came, and she was delivered of a male child. And Hilarion took it and laid it in the manger. And he went forth into the woods and found the ancient wizard Hieronymus, and the lady Magdalen, and said:

"Come with me to the ruined house, for truly there is He whom you be seeking."

And they followed him to the ruined house where the fir-trees were cleared above the river; and they saw the babe lying in the manger, and Hieronymus and Magdalen kneeled down, saying, "Surely this is He that is our

Master, for He is wiser and more fair than either."

And the skies opened, and there came forth angels, such as Hilarion had seen, with glories of solid gold round their heads, and garlands of roses about their necks, and they took hands and danced, and sang, flying up: "Gloria in Excelsis Deo."

VERNON LEE.

MAIANO, NEAR FLORENCE,
St. John Baptist's Feast, 1903.

THE LIFE OF ST. MARY MAGDALEN

At the time when Christ was on earth, and was preaching to men, Mary Magdalen was living in the same country; and she was the most beautiful woman that could be found in the world, excepting the Virgin Mary, who was more beautiful without compare, even in body. And as the Magdalen was beautiful, so she was of great intellect, though we must admit she was marred by evil desires.

And in the history of St. Martha it is related that her father was a valiant man, and high in the favour of the emperors of Rome, for he had done much to serve them. So the emperors, wishing to reward his good deeds, gave him the third part of Jerusalem, and also two castles; one was called Magdalo, and the other Bethany. Thus that wise man, who was called Siro, when making his testament, apportioned shares to his children, and he gave

Lazarus the larger and more noble share, as was meet, and to Mary he left that castle which was called Magdalo. And I think he loved her dearly, because she was comely; and I think that as that castle was much more magnificent than Bethany, therefore he gave it to her, and she, whose name was Mary, was henceforth called Magdalen from that castle. Because she was his first-born daughter, he gave her the name that at that time was most honourable; so she was called Mary for her chief name, and surnamed Magdalen because of the castle where she was mistress.

About that time it happened that this beautiful damsel was betrothed, and St. Jerome (who wrote much, and sought very diligently into the things concerning Christ and those men who believed in Him,) says that she was the spouse of John the Evangelist; but the Church neither affirms it nor forbids it: as for me, it delights me much to think in my thoughts that it was so. But there are many who say that she was so great a lady, and that John was only the son of a fisherman; and I say that at that time the crafts and trades did not debase the gentle nature and nobility of a family.

Now do we not find that David was a shepherd, and, before him, Jacob the Patriarch herded sheep for fourteen years; and since many others laboured in diverse ways, must we not suppose that such works were honourable?

Therefore I think that though the Magdalen was richer than John, John was more noble than she was, for he came of a higher race, and he was most beautiful in person, a youth of much virtue and of most noble mind, and son of that holy woman, the sister of the Virgin Mary. So that for all these things it seems to me that the Magdalen could better accept him, than he her; yet we must admit that in these days it would not be thus, since those who are rich are held great and noble, and those who labour to live are despised and abased, although they be of gentle blood.

Now, therefore, I like to think that the Magdalen was the spouse of John, not affirming it, but finding pleasure in the thought that the world used to be thus. I am glad and blythe that St. Jerome should say so. And St. John, that most fair and beloved saint, so much delights me, that I think so beautiful

and lovely a maiden was only meet for him; and we must suppose that she was not yet a sinner, or that betrothal would not have been made.

Now let us come to consider the marriage; and this, I say, appears also to be held for truth, that the marriage in Cana was that of St. John the Evangelist. And they say that our Lord Jesus Christ, after the feast, took away John the Evangelist with Him, wishing that he should remain pure; and He had wrought there that beautiful miracle of the water made wine, whereat the people marvelled much. And I think that the Magdalen marvelled together with the others, but her heart was not touched, for it was roving and full of the vanity of the world. But when the news came to her that her spouse had gone with Jesus, truly her heart was troubled with great grief, although she did not yet lose the hope that he might return; and one day following another she grieved much for this, and the mother of St. John and the other kindred all were afflicted and sorrowful.

And being like this for some days, seeing he did not return, I think they sent to him to

know what he meant to do in this matter. And I think he replied that they might do as they liked, but he himself did not expect ever to return. When this news came the dismay was very great; and we must admit that though his mother and the others feared God and were reconciled to His will, nevertheless they showed much grief because of this noble damsel, who must needs be sent home.

When the Magdalen knew this thing and saw herself scorned and ridiculed I think she was very wroth, and, sending for her brother, she returned home. Also I think for several months the Magdalen was in great grief, and many artifices were wrought by her and her kindred to get him back. Together with her they took trouble to discover if she could not regain that spouse in whom she had placed all her love, and who had made her the proudest woman in the world. But she did not well understand that John had another love more comely, more beautiful, and of high price, that is, the charity of God, so that he had cast out of his heart, and out of his mind, the love of her and of any other earthly thing. The reason that I have devised and do devise these words

—indeed I hold them for certain—is that the Magdalen may be somewhat excused in the eyes of worldly people for the evil life she led after a little while.

Now let us return to her.

I think to myself that when the Magdalen saw that he could not be brought back to her, being in despair because of her loneliness, she gave herself up to a reckless life; she pursued pleasure and diversion so as not to die of grief, and she was glad to do him dishonour, but we must own that she did it still more to herself. And the devils seeing her heart thus prepared, entered there, not one but seven, with seven mortal sins; for the Gospel says that our Lord cast out from her seven devils.

So the Magdalen now began to seek pleasure and amusement, and to go forth to feasts and places of diversion, showing herself in deed and attire not modest. And I think that at first her kindred, who loved her dearly, were glad that she should seek distraction and not die of grief; they did not expect that the evil would grow so widespread as it afterwards did, nor would they have wished it.

And they say in the story of St. Martha that

no one believes that she yielded to such shame, that it would not have been suffered, that her brother, her kindred, and her friends would have imprisoned her, for they would have reclaimed her. And it is not to be believed that she squandered her temporal goods, as it is said in the songs of the blind; but it is quite enough that she had sin in her desires, and would have consented thereto, if it had not been for this restraint put upon her.

And here one might ask: "Now why was she held a sinner in all the city, and had lost her fair name, and why was she esteemed an evil-doer in the eyes of all good people?" And I answer and think to myself that such was the virtue of all good women at that time, that if any yielded to dishonesty she was abhorred and scorned by all who knew her; and Mary was a great lady, and known to many; she was most fair in form, and for this also was well known, and her tongue was glib with words of unseemly merriment; and she was such that all good and virtuous women covered their faces when they saw her, for so great was the virtue of all good women in those days that, as we know, one taken in

adultery was condemned by the law to be stoned. This is in the Gospel, but nowadays it is not so.

And we know that when women went to churches and to festivals, the men went by one road, and the women by another. And this also is in the Gospel, for when Messer Jesus Christ was lost at the festival it is said that His mother thought He was with Joseph, and Joseph thought He was at home with His mother, before they perceived that He was lost. And then, you see, choirs were made in the churches, that is, a wall in the middle between the men and the women, and that is still done to this day. But I believe these choirs were differently made, for there were different entrances for men and women, and a woman would never have entered by that of the men, or she would have been held worse than a sinner, and would have been hunted out as a demon; such was the virtue of women.

And not a hundred years ago widows, who were about to return to the world, remained shut up until they received the ring and changed their mourning garments; and all this

I saw done in my childhood; and if there were any young women who stayed over long at the windows, ill was spoken of them, and they were thought immodest; and this also I remember well. And if I have said so much about the honesty of women, I have done so for the reason that thus the Magdalen's sinfulness is aggravated; for certainly I have thought many times of the women of to-day, seeing their graceless carriage, that had they lived in the time of the Magdalen, they would have been called more than sinners; but because these customs are common to all, it seems that people are heedless thereof. Certain I am that the Magdalen did not uncover her bosom as they do. I know well that the Magdalen had that sin in her heart, but I cannot believe that she yielded to it, as many will have it said; but her brazen ways and the other sins that she committed were quite enough to render her infamous.

Now let us tell of Martha, according to what is said in the legend. Martha was ill, and for her illness there was neither physician nor physic. She had a handmaiden whose name was Martilla, who I think had first been with

their mother, and had helped to bring up these children, and she dwelt with them to be a mother to them, and as housekeeper and guardian of all their things. She was very wise and experienced, and loved this family, though she loved best to be with Martha, for she was the youngest and was ill, and was good and pious and wise; and they grieved much for the Magdalen, and took shame to themselves for the evil fame that she bore, and especially when this holy woman sometimes went round about for things of necessity, and found that the good women, and perhaps also the good men were saying, "What scandal is this? Now what a thing is this to let a maiden act in such a way that all the city speaks of her? And Lazarus does not seem to perceive it. Why do ye not rather hold her captive?"

Martilla shrank from their words and did not know what to say; and she could not excuse her, for she herself was much distressed by such ways.

And returning home she would confer with Martha concerning these words, and many times they wept together in great sorrow.

And I think that sometimes they called



Mansell Photo.

THE MAGDALEN

After the painting by Carlo Crivelli in the National Gallery

Mary and told her of these sayings, and chid her severely; then I think that Mary would begin to laugh and sing and would run away from them, and would not stay to hear, so that they were left in far greater grief.

And there came some of their kindred, and of their great friends, men and women, who said sadly, "What is to be done with her? and in what way will ye hinder her? She has lost her fair name in all the city, and is called a sinner by all virtuous people, so that there are few who call her by her real name, and we are all ashamed to speak of her ill repute; people wish that she should be kept captive, and marvel that Lazarus should suffer her."

And Martha and Martilla wept; and I think that Martilla said, "Lazarus is young, and he is of the world, and does not believe these things, nor are they told to him as much as they are to us; and it seems that it pleases him to go with her to seek amusement, for he loves her much, so that there seems to be no remedy for this trouble. But tell it to him, and we also will tell him, to see if he will help."

And Martha grieved so deeply that her illness increased.

And these words were not said once nor twice, but many times, and it seemed that none could succeed in finding the remedy. There was no physician for this malady save One, and He did arise and did heal her as we shall see.

Now let us make an end of this first part.

Martha and Martilla being in such distress and tribulation because of this sister, and finding no other remedy, they turned to God with many prayers, and they gave much in alms, beseeching Him that He would put an end to the great wickedness that there was in this young girl. And that holy woman, that is, Martilla, wherever she heard tell of a holy person, she went thither, taking alms and many offerings on the part of Martha, and with gentle tears begged such a one that he would pray God to bring this maiden to a good end, since they feared it might be otherwise.

And at that time Jesus Christ was preaching and doing many miracles every day in Jerusalem and in the country round, so that the fame thereof was heard in every part. And I think

that this blessed Martilla went to His sermons to hear His teaching and to see the great miracles that He wrought. And I think to myself that He loved her for her goodwill, and because she was a virtuous woman. And she would return home and tell these great miracles to Martha; and sometimes the Magdalen was there, who immediately rose and fled away, and would not hear of His deeds. And I think it was at the instigation of the devils that she fled and would not hear; for they were afraid of God, and of what might happen, and thus she always fled from Him; for if He went and passed into one countryside she fled into another, and the devils who urged her would not suffer that she should stay to hear tell of His doings, for truly I think that they saw dispositions in her, naturally so gentle and noble, that had she stayed to see or to hear the words of Christ Jesus, she would immediately have been converted; hence the demons kept fast watch.

And Martha, hearing that which was told her by Martilla, and by many others who came to her, began to give faith to this Master, and to love Him.

And I think if it were true that the Magdalen was the wife of St. John—that is, bride—that Martha and her kindred for a little while at first would bear ill-will to this Master and His disciples because they had taken away her sister's spouse, whence so much evil had come to her. But now, beginning to believe in Him and to render Him a little honour because of the many good deeds she heard tell of Him, humility entered her heart. And I think that maybe she discoursed secretly with Martilla, saying, "Couldst thou contrive to speak with some of His disciples and commend our sister to them, so that they may know that she was the spouse of their compagnon! And I think they must have heard how uncontrolled she is. Would that they might pity her and recommend her to their Master, that He might work a miracle! for I see no other way to change her; and I have understood that this Master does not refuse to receive sinners, but rather calls them to be amongst His holy disciples. See, Matthew was a money-changer, and Zachary chief of the publicans, and they have become His disciples; so, if He has pity for these, maybe He will convert her to well-doing."

To this Martilla replied and said, "My blessed child, these words and thy holy thoughts please me well, and I promise thee, I will do all I can to speak with some of them, and to humble me as much as I know how, that they may recommend her to this blessed Master, and perhaps in this way we shall be consoled."

Now Martilla sought to speak to the apostles, and I think that she spoke very humbly and with many tears, and she told them all about it, saying, "Ye know that John, who is of your company, was the spouse of the Magdalen, and this Blessed Master took him away the day of the marriage, whence she has given herself to much despair. Wherefore I pray ye with all my heart to have pity and mercy on her, and on all those others who are sorrowful because of her." I think the apostles comforted her, saying, "Our Master is so good, He willingly helps sinners, and He says that He has come only to help sinners. And therefore thou must certainly have faith in Him; for if thou doest trust Him, He will help thee in thy need."

And I think that to increase her confidence,

they narrated to her many miracles which they had seen Him do, and especially those of the woman of Samaria, and of her of Canaan, and many others; whence Martilla felt great confidence, and returned home comforted, and said to Martha, "Be consoled, my child, for if thou hast faith we shall be helped in all our necessities."

And she began to relate that which the apostles had said to her, and Martha was instantly full of faith, and said, "I see that this Master will yet be our every good."

And she began to think on these things, and the more she thought, the more the light of faith grew in her.

And during the evening Martilla began to tell Lazarus and Mary of these beautiful things that she had heard about this Master, without, however, saying from whom she had heard them, nor why she had gone thither. And I think that Lazarus stayed to hear, but Mary tossed her head, and went away saying, "Oh, cease this chatter."

And Lazarus seemed amazed at the beautiful things they had heard.

And Martha stayed at home, and that night

she thought deeply on these things, and took counsel with herself, saying, "I will go to this Master, and I am certain that He will heal me of my infirmity, if I can but touch Him or see Him. And this will be all the better for me, as then my brother and sister will see that which they will not believe by hearsay; then perhaps they will be converted to His doctrine; and even if they will not be converted, I want this good thing for myself."

And having thus deliberated, the next morning she told her thoughts to Martilla; and this good woman full of gladness, said, "My child, thou hast thought well; for from Him thou canst receive nothing but good for both soul and body. But let us do thus; let us send for two of the most venerable women amongst our friends, and let us talk with them, and confide in them concerning these things, and let us arrange how they may best be done. For thou art very weak now, and thy illness has greatly increased."

And Martha replied that she was well pleased with these words, and she said, "Do not doubt that Messer the Lord God will help us, for already I feel my heart all comforted."

And so they did. And these good women came and encouraged her, saying, "My child, thou hast thought rightly, that this will certainly be done to thee, and that thou wilt be healed and cured, for this is the greatest Prophet that has ever been seen amongst the people of God; rather it seems that He is God, and that which He wills He can do. And one of these days a leper knelt before Him, and said, 'Master, if Thou wilt Thou canst cleanse me.' And this Master laid His hand upon the leper's head, and said, 'I will cleanse thee,' and immediately he was clean from all ill. Thus, my daughter, for certain thou wilt be healed if thou goest to Him, and if thou doest mean to do so, we will arrange that an honourable company of good women go with thee, and that good men and strong shall carry thee, and keep the crowd from pressing upon thee."

Martha replied that indeed she wished to go, and all these things arranged, they sent a messenger, or maybe more than one, to know where was Jesus, and where He would lodge the night; and perhaps they thus delayed some days. But I believe the messengers

returned in all haste, and said, "We have heard that this Master has just now passed by such and such a road with a multitude of people, more than words can tell, and He goes to heal the daughter of the chief of the synagogue."

And Martha hearing these words, began to cry, "Let us go at once." And she felt herself on fire with her love, and this love was such that she longed to see Him and to hear Him; I think that the desire to be cured grew in her, since it seems that these holy women immediately began with pure love their work of charity. This will be well proved later on.

And now Martha started forth, accompanied by noble women and many others of her family, and good and strong men were well-nigh carrying her in their arms; and almost all the neighbourhood were following her, for honour of her who was their mistress, and also to see the sight; and so they arrived at the place where Messer Jesus was passing, and Martha cast her eyes over the great throng, and saw the venerable Master in the midst thereof, and immediately the love in her heart was doubled, but she almost despaired of

being able to obtain favour of Him this time; however, she decided thus: "If I can only touch the hem of His garment, I have faith that I shall be healed in body and soul; and it may be that I shall succeed, so that I shall be able to see Him, and speak to Him."

And she began to encourage those who were supporting her to push through the people, and to help her well. And thus they did. Each one put out his hand to thrust the people here and there, and also the people seeing that it was one ill going to be cured, each one yielded place as far as he could, so that she arrived at the feet of Messer Jesus, and immediately she knelt with great reverence in her heart, and touched the hem of His garment and kissed it, and pressed it against her face with all the desire of her heart. And the Lord, who knew what she did, scarcely moved, but almost stood still, and said to His disciples: "Who touches Me?"

And they, not perceiving what had happened, replied: "Messer, dost Thou ask who touches Thee, when the crush of people is so great that we are in danger of stifling?"

And the benign Lord turned back and looked upon Martha, who was there reverently

upon the ground. And I think He laid His hands upon her head and said: "Comfort thee, my daughter. Thy good faith hath made thee whole. Go in peace."

And Martha looked into the face of Christ, and saw His benignity, and the love in her heart redoubled beyond estimation; and she understood from that word, when He said "Go in peace," and did not say "Come," that He desired that she should return home. And immediately she rose upright upon her feet, needing no help, strong, well, and comely as she should be, and even more. And it seemed that a splendour shone in her face, so that all the people looked at her in wonder; and the noise of praise and benediction raised in piety to God and to this Holy One, was greater than words can tell.

And behold Martha returned home uplifted with joy. And when she drew near the neighbourhood all the people ran to see her, and they seemed scarcely to recognise her; and every one decided that this was one of the greatest miracles that has ever been, for they knew all about her illness from the first, and all the house was filled with people.

Martha having come home healed in such a manner, they sent to Lazarus, who was away seeking diversion on his land, and they said to him: "Come, for Martha is healed."

And he wondered much and said: "How can she be cured?"

And they answered and said: "The great Prophet, who is called Jesus, has healed her, and she is stronger and more beautiful than she has ever been before."

And Lazarus returned home immediately, and when he saw her, he was almost stupefied, and asked how it had come about. And Martha and all those who were with her began to speak, and to recount this thing. Then Lazarus began to speak and to shed tears of devotion. And now there entered into his heart the great light of faith, and with it both love and longing, and the intention to speak with this most noble Master.

And also it was told to Mary who was in the city, and she tossed her head, and did not believe so soon as Lazarus, because she was held faster by the demons, and was more weighted with sin; and for this reason she did not return home until the evening as usual.

And the fame of this miracle was great, for this family was very noble and very well known.

Now behold the Magdalen returned in the evening, and she climbed the stairs singing and chattering as she always did. And Martha was full of trust, because the Lord Jesus had said to her: "Have faith, my daughter," so that I think she was confident that the Magdalen would be converted. And she thought to herself and said: "What shall I do if she will not be converted? For I am aware that this house is chosen amongst all others to shelter this sweet Master and His mother, and His disciples, and any other virtuous person who may desire it. And if she will not be converted, one of two things will happen—either she will go away and will not return, or, if she should return, she would scandalise them; so that this, which I think to do, would not be well done. And for this reason the faith in me makes me certain that Mary also will be converted. And Lazarus already being converted, we shall then all three be servants of this blessed Master."

And then, I think, when she heard the Mag-

dalen coming up the stairs, she rose upright and went to meet her, and she embraced her, with great happiness in her new-found health; and when the Magdalen saw her she was amazed, and I think she felt a violent emotion, she herself not knowing what, and strange imaginings troubled her. I think that the demons who were with her received a great shock at the touch of Martha, who was full of charity and fervour, for devils hold charity in abhorrence; and I think they lost their strength, and scarcely could hinder her more, though we must suppose they did not yet depart out of her, but they were dismayed, and waited to see what she would do.

And thus stupefied, the Magdalen seemed scarcely able to speak to her sister, but she gazed at her, and saw a new splendour in Martha's face, which awoke a great wonderment in her, and such a pleasure in good as a sick person will feel when the illness begins to abate a little. And she listened to what Martha told of this blessed Master, of the words He had said to her, and of the miracle, how as soon as she had touched Him she felt herself freed from all sickness and all evil.

And all the other people who were there spoke of this miracle, and of many others, and the Magdalen stayed to hear what never before had she been able to listen to, and about which she could never endure to hear a single word.

And that venerable Martilla, who had brought up these children, looked into Mary's face, and saw that she was moved, and also that she was staying to listen, as she never used to stay. Then there came gladness into her heart, greater than can be told, and she arose with great fervour and went away into her room, and with tears of devotion she threw herself on the ground, praising God with all her heart, and saying, "Lord God, I see that Thou hast helped me through virtue of this blessed Master and Prophet whom Thou hast sent on earth."

And though Martha was preaching and discoursing of the miracles of this blessed Master, and of His goodness, which she had seen and heard tell of, none the less she looked in Mary Magdalen's face, and saw the change upon her countenance, whereon already she discerned a glory. And the gaiety which was usually on her face had vanished, and she was transformed, waiting to hear the words spoken by

her sister and all who were there, telling how He had raised the dead, and from many had cast out devils, and how He cured from every ill. And I think to myself that the Magdalen was beginning to enter into the light of faith, whence she perceived in her heart that she was yielding love to the goodness she heard related of Him; and I think she said to herself: "If this Prophet receives sinners, alas! how willingly would I see and hear Him! but yet, even if He would not receive me, still must I love such goodness and sweetness as they recount of Him."

And behold already she had begun to give a boundless love to Jesus Christ, who knowing what He would do in her soul, thus made one of these others answer her thought; and I think that he said: "See, though this Master is so good and works so many miracles, yet our elders accuse Him, saying that He eats with publicans and sinners, and that He forgives them their sins."

And Magdalen hearing this, gave her mind to listen well and to apprehend these words.

And another said: "And I tell you this: He called Matthew who was a usurer, and held



Brogi Photo.

THE MAGDALEN

After the painting by Carlo Dolci at Rome

his bank at such and such a place, and he left everything, and has become this Master's disciple, and is ever with Him."

And another began to tell of her who was taken in adultery, of the woman of Canaan, and of her of Samaria.

And the Magdalen hearing this, covered her face and began to weep.

And Mary Magdalen went away to her room, and locking the door, she threw herself down outstretched upon the ground with so great a cry, that it seemed as if her heart was broken, and she lamented, saying: "What have I done, and what has been my life, soiled and sunk in such evil, and full of so much misery, that even if there were no God, nor profit to the soul, yet ought I to cry and cry again to see myself thus debased and defamed in the sight of all who are good."

And she recalled too well all the things that she had ever done, weeping and lamenting for each one and for all, more than words can tell.

And the devils who molested her seeing this were all dismayed, saying: "What shall we do, for we have lost her?"

And they took counsel together and said:

"We must no longer tempt her with sins as before, since we see that she is repenting them bitterly. But rather we must do thus: let us aggravate these sins in her sight, as greatly as we can; and then also let us do another thing: let us praise this Jesus for His great power, His virtue, and His rare excellence, so that she may not dare even think of desiring to go to Him; and if we can do this, she will despair, and then maybe it will be permitted to us to kill her; or if not, we will stimulate her to kill herself, and we cannot believe that thus she would be received of God; so many and such are the sins she has committed and made others commit."

O fools! to think yourselves wiser than He who created you!

And as Mary lay humiliated upon the ground, true contrition entered into her soul, and she repented, more than words can say, for the fault committed; and on the other side, and not from her own virtue, an unbounded love entered into her heart, which caused her to repent even more, and to be ashamed for the dishonour done to God and to all good people, and she spoke thus to herself: "See, if I went

to hell it would be the fairest justice, and the most reasonable judgment that ever was; but the good God who created me in His own image will repair the dishonour I have done to Him, the evil life I have led, and the bad example I have given."

And at this she redoubled her bitter weeping.

And I think that Martha and Martilla went softly to the door of her room and listened to her sorrowful weeping, and sometimes she uttered a cry with such grievous sighs, that it seemed her heart was breaking. And the blessed Martha and Martilla returned to their room, with more gladness than could be told, and they thanked God with great reverence, and such love as none could estimate, and they said to each other: "Now we see that she is converted. Oh, what happiness we shall have together at last! Now what a miracle is this! This is a greater wonder than raising the dead. It seems that this blessed Master can do what He will, as if He were God."

Well, well, they said truly, for He was both God and man. However, I do not think that they understood this perfectly yet, but they were preparing themselves well for the com-

prehension thereof. And that night they could not sleep, but all the time they were praising God, and wondering how they might obtain the friendship of this blessed Master, and intimacy with Him. And, moreover, they were confident that such friendship would be brought about.

Now let us return to Mary Magdalen, who was in her room sorrowing for her sins. And the seven devils who had ever goaded her on, now, as they had agreed, magnified her sins, representing to her that her guilt was greater than words can say; and indeed it seemed so to her, and for a little she was stupefied at the thought of such and so many sins. And when they saw her thus overcome, they represented to her the mightiness of God, and the greatness of His virtues, that is, of His infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; and when they spoke of His goodness she uttered a great cry, saying: "Well do I discern that goodness, which has borne with me! How long ago might He not have sent me to hell, and still He has borne with me, that He might have mercy on me, waiting till I should repent me of my sins, till I should desire to do penance.

And now I desire to do His will, according to the wisdom of this Master, whom He has sent on earth to heal me, body and soul; and it will seem to me a thousand years till I can throw myself at His feet. And if I thought I might find Him now, this night, I would go to seek Him, but I do not think that He desires it."

And when the devils perceived that the great light of faith had entered her soul, they marvelled much, and were aghast, scarcely knowing what more to say, since that by which they had thought to lead her to such iniquity, had surely led her to such good. But they took counsel once more, and spoke thus: "She says she will go to this Jesus, and if she goes, He will instantly cast us out from her, as He has already done to our companions, and we shall have no more power to urge her."

And they agreed to answer her in such and such a way, when she said in her heart: "Oh, good Messer Jesus, when shall I go forth to seek Thee! This night is longer than any I have ever known."

And the devils replied to her thoughts and said: "Art thou not ashamed to desire to go

to Him? Now art thou not clothed in all the ugliness of sin? And know, one cannot discover that He has ever sinned, but is clean and pure as when His mother bore Him. And thou, corrupt and hateful to God and man, who art thou, that thou wouldst go to Him? Why, then! what impudence leads thee to Him? Wilt thou be bold enough to approach Him?"

And when this thought came to the Magdalen, she was abashed, and she perceived the ugliness of her sins; and the demons around her urged these words in many ways, seeing that she did not yet know what to reply. And while she was being thus molested, behold a divine light shone in her room, and said: "Mary, do not fear to go to Jesus, for He is the best and the most gentle Physician that has ever been seen in this world. And the greater and the viler the illness, so much the more the Physician, if he be good, stays beside him who is ill, and so much the more strives to heal him; for the greater the illness, the greater honour to the Physician. And this one heals quickly, so much the more to reveal His goodness; but thou must trust in Him."

And the Magdalen began to cry aloud, saying: "Thus will I do with all my faith and all my love; and I will place all my hope in Him as if I were ill, for I perceive and acknowledge that He is the supreme Physician for soul and body."

So then the devils were defeated upon this point, and they said to each other: "In this also we have gone from bad to worse. And thus He knows how to discomfit us, when He will." But still they looked out for somewhat more to say to her, and they brought this thought before her. "See, this Master desires poverty. His mother is poor, and it is His will that His disciples should all be poor, so much so, that they have sometimes gathered the ears of corn, separating the grain with their hands, to eat it, for He wishes that they should possess nothing."

And this well-nigh overcame the Magdalen, for it was a new thought to her.

But immediately she was succoured, and she thought thus: "I will put myself entirely into the hands of this blessed Master, and He will take away from me this infirmity of soul, so that His will shall be my will. And all my

delight and all my pleasure shall be to desire what will please Him. And, moreover, yesterday evening I understood that Zachary was so moved with gladness and consolation, when he received Him in his house, that he said to Him: 'Master, take all my goods and give them to the poor according to Thy will.' I think his soul was so full of happiness that he had no care for the outward things around him." And she said to herself: "This then is what thou hast to do; to go to Him as soon as thou art able, and put thyself in His hands, that He may work His will in thee without opposition. And blest indeed shall I be if He receives me!"

And the devil replied at once to her thoughts and said: "But perhaps He will not receive thee."

But she disregarded this answer, and took comfort, saying: "I will go to Him as the woman of Canaan went, with humility, importunity, and perseverence, that He may have mercy on me, for they have told me that He is benign and pitiful; so that I will go to Him whatever happens. And such is my desire to see Him, that if I were shut

up, locked and bound in prison all day to-morrow, so that I could not go to seek Him, I think they would find me dead before the evening." And she said to herself: "Do not listen any longer to those thoughts that deter thee from what thou wouldst do. Cast them from thee, for it is right that thou shouldst do thus, through the goodness of God." And she began to say: "Alas! when will the day come that I may go to seek Him whom my soul desires! How long a night is this! Never have I seen one so long."

Well, well, she spoke truly.

And rising up with fervour she lit a lamp, and began to take out ointments that she possessed, and she chose the most precious from amongst them, filling thereof an alabaster box, and prepared it to carry with her, all the while sighing and shedding tears. Then she went to the window and saw that day was breaking, and she was very, very glad, nor did she lie down to sleep as usual.

And Mary Magdalen waited no longer, but took her cloak and covered her face so as not to be recognised by all she met as usual, and she took the box under her cloak; and thus

she went out very early all alone to seek Messer Jesus, the desire of her soul, who already loved her more than any can estimate. And she went to the Temple because they had told her that most of the time He was there, but she did not find Him, and she hurried hither and thither, and she could not find Him; she asked for Him, but none could tell her where He was, for Messer Jesus Christ did not wish her to find Him save at the Pharisee's house; and the more she sought Him, the more her longing grew, and compelled her ever on to look for Him.

Now it happened according to Christ's will, and they told Mary Magdalen that Messer Jesus had gone to eat in the house of Simon the Leper, where they had made a great banquet for Him, and that there were there many other Pharisees. But Mary paid no heed when they said that others were there besides the good Jesus, for she sought no other than Him. Nor do I think that she said: "Now how will this appear to others, and what will they say?" Neither: "It would not be meet to go into another's house, especially when they are feasting, and during

a great banquet to weep where others are making merry." Or again: "Know that thou wilt be ill received, for thou art hateful in their sight and infamous in all the city."

No, no! the Magdalen thought none of these things; she had no other care but to find Christ, to receive mercy from Him, and to be reconciled with Him, for she loved Him more than herself, and above all other things that one can think of; and because of this all other care had left her; and the more she thought of Him the more she loved Him, and the more ardent was her longing.

So Mary Magdalen came to the house of the Pharisee, and, entering, she asked no word of any there, but went up the stairs; and the guests were already seated at the table. And when the Magdalen saw Him, she instantly recognised the good Jesus, and she went behind Him, and threw herself on the ground at His feet. And all who were there cast their glances on her with great surprise, but they said nothing to her, and did not send her away, for she was a great lady, according to the world, though we must admit she was of ill fame; and on the other side, they thought

that Jesus would chase her away, nor let such a woman touch Him, and they murmured in their hearts, saying that He did not recognise her.

Now let us return to Mary, who had taken the feet of Christ in her hands with great reverence, and she had no need to uncover them, for the Lord of all virtue went barefoot. And Mary Magdalen, kissing these feet, and weeping, washed them with her tears over and under, and dried them with her hair, and anointed them over and under with the precious ointment in that way which she thought would most benefit Him, first one foot and then the other; and Jesus was eating, and let her do her will, and He delighted in that which she offered Him, while He cared nothing for all that was on the table. O Messer Jesus, who didst see the hearts and thoughts of others, Thou didst look into the hearts of these false Pharisees, who murmured against Thee, thinking that Thou hadst not the knowledge of a Prophet, who outwardly seemed religious and courteous, and made a great show of so being; and Mary Magdalen, who was at Thy feet, was hateful



Anderson Photo.

THE MAGDALEN

After the painting by Bellini at Venice

and displeasing to all virtuous people, and guilty through her past evil life, but the heart in her, as she wept at Thy feet, was made the dwelling-place of God; and she was in a state of grace, for God was in her, and she in Thee through Thy charity, and therefore her heart was more precious than all the treasures one can think of. And Thou, who art the true Judge, verily Thou couldst estimate that which our eyes seeing yet would not have known how to discern.

But, thou, Mary, wast speaking thus:

"Messer, my sins are such and so many that I could not count them, and my life is so hateful in mine own eyes that, while so close to Thy purity and touching Thy sweet feet, I have not the courage to remember it. But I know and believe that Thou knowest all things better than I could tell Thee, and therefore I ask nothing else but that Thou shouldst take away from me now and for ever and ever all that displeases Thee in me, and I know that Thou canst do this; I ask this grace for love of Thy charity, and if Thou receivest and healest so great a sinner, it will be one of the greatest things Thou hast ever done."

And with this she wept so violently that I think her heart would have broken had not God strengthened her, for He reserved her for greater works, and He hearkened to her words with great pleasure.

And Mary, weeping, again put up her hands, and said: "Oh, good Jesus, if I am not worthy to receive mercy from Thee, yet I ask from Thy kindness that which my heart desires. And I beseech Thee to give me grace through Thine infinite goodness that, having dishonoured Thee all my life, henceforth I can do Thee honour whilst Thou dost will that I should live, that I may do Thy will and never again mine own, and that Thou wilt give me grace to revenge on myself with true penitence the wrong I have done Thee."

And she said this with great fervour of heart, feeling that no vengeance could be enough to satisfy her, and to her mind all the pains in the world would be nothing in respect to her great fault.

And whilst she was thus at His feet, she heard Messer Jesus Christ speaking with Simon, as it is told in the Gospel; and she looked up to hear Him speak, for never before had she

heard Him, and so sweet was the sound of His voice in her heart that well-nigh she swooned away. But she took comfort as she heard more distinctly, and she listened attentively to everything He said; but she was comforted only when she had heard all clearly, how He said that she had done well, and when she heard Him say: "Many sins are forgiven her, for she has loved much."

Oh, good Jesus, didst Thou say that the Magdalen had loved much? Yet this immensity of love was not great through length of time, for we know that she did not love Thee when she offended Thee. And therefore I think it was that boundless ocean of charity which is never so little but it overflows, and which is of rarer worth than all created things, whence she loved Thee and Thy love more than herself; and she grieved for the guilt of her sin towards Thee far more than for the evil consequences it might bring upon her. And her heart was sunk in humility and gratitude, and in such love that I think no brain could estimate it nor tongue tell it.

And this good Jesus turned towards her, who henceforth would no longer possess her-

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Oh, good Jesus, didst Thou say that the Magdalen had loved much? Yet this immensity of love was not great through length of time, for we know that she did not love Thee when she offended Thee. And therefore I think it was that boundless ocean of charity which is never so little but it overflows, and which is of rarer worth than all created things, whence she loved Thee and Thy love more than herself; and she grieved for the guilt of her sin towards Thee far more than for the evil consequences it might bring upon her. And her heart was sunk in humility and gratitude, and in such love that I think no brain could estimate it nor tongue tell it.

And this good Jesus turned towards her, who henceforth would no longer possess her-

self, and said: "Woman, thy faith hath made thee whole" (and I think it penetrated into her heart). "Thy petitions are granted, and thy desire shall be fulfilled." And He said: "Go in peace."

And then all the devils were cast out from her, and all the guilt of sin taken from her, and she was filled with the love of charity, and with greater gladness than I can tell. And she understood by this word that Jesus spoke, "Go in peace," that He wished her to go from Him.

And she turned again to those blessed feet, and kissed them, saying softly: "For all the things Thou hast ever done, and doest, and will do, I praise Thee and give Thee thanks, my Lord, as many as the stars in heaven, as many as the grains of sand in the sea, and in all the rivers of the world."

And once more lifting the hem of His garment, she pressed it to her face with devotion, and with bitter tears. And Messer Jesus willingly suffered all things from her, for He knew her soul. Oh, good Jesus, Thou didst no longer recall her past evil life; the love of charity had quenched all other things.

Blessed be the desire of her heart in all eternity, for though in that hour she might not stay longer by His side, yet she bore Him with her in her heart, and for this reason she went in peace; for whoever is His, goes in peace.

And now the blessed Magdalen turned to go home, where they awaited her with great gladness, and her heart was so full of the beloved Master, and of the memory of His words, and the happiness they had brought her, that she seemed as one who had lost her senses, for she appeared neither to see nor hear any one.

And now she arrived home, and Martha and Lazarus, who were expecting her with joy, looked in her face and they instantly knew that she was full of all virtue, for she exhaled a great splendour with an air of charity and purity, that only yesterday was so different.

And Martha arose and embraced her with reverence born of tender love such as one cannot tell, and so did Lazarus and Martilla, who had longed so deeply that she might come to the light of truth; and the Magdalen sat by them to give them comfort and to tell

them of the grace she had received from that most sweet Master. And so she began to speak, and when she repeated Christ's words it seemed that a flame of love and of such fervour enlightened her, that all there felt themselves filled with a new joy; nor did they care to eat, though we must suppose that all was prepared.

And the Magdalen said: "See, my dear ones, of all the things that we have to do in the world, let the first be to bring about that this blessed Master should come to lodge in our house, He and His disciples; let this be His resting-place and His shelter, and may He do as He will with us and with our things. How blest we should be if this should happen!" And each one replied: "May it be so; we will strive for this with great gladness." And it was not only they, but all the household who heard this with joy.

And then they arranged that Lazarus, as soon as he had dined, should go to seek Him, and humbly and reverently invite Him to come that evening to sup with them, and to lodge in their house, where He was awaited with such longing as words cannot tell; and

when this was arranged they went to dine. And I think that they could eat nothing at all, for they were nourished with heavenly bread and so full of happiness that eating seemed only a hindrance to their joy. And as soon as they arose, Lazarus left the house and went with great fervour to seek this blessed Master, taking with him those that pleased him of the company. And Martha and Martilla and Mary clung closely together; and Martha said: "I pray thee with all my heart, my sister, to tell me once more all the words that thou didst hear from the lips of this most sweet Master, for my soul delights therein more than I can say."

Then Magdalen began to speak, and she repeated word for word all that Messer Jesus had said to Simon and to herself. And Martha and Martilla rejoiced in these words more than I can tell, and when all was told, each of them fell to praying and praising God.

Then first spoke Martha to Mary: "And now, my sister, if He should come this evening, what shall we do and what prepare?"

And the Magdalen replied: "I pray thee, dearest sister, that thou doest all thou canst

and all thou knowest how to do, for thou couldst never do so much, but more would be due to Him. And excuse me from aiding thee, my sister, for I can do no other than think of Him and of His love, and grieve from my heart when I consider how much and for how long a time I have offended Him; and I think my heart would break with sorrow did not He Himself support me."

And Martha replied: "Now go in peace, my sister, and do what thou wilt. I will do all I can and know how to achieve; and be thou blessed."

And Martha was well content to see that Mary was converted and desirous of doing good. And behold Mary was happy, and she went swiftly to her room and, locking the door, she threw herself upon the ground in all humility. For a divine light was in her soul, which revealed to her the baseness of human nature, that was nothing compared to the Creator thereof, and showed her how great was the daring and foolish madness of those who offended Him. And then she turned to consider the goodness of God who ever bears patiently with our follies, awaiting our con-

version to life. And this thought inspired her with such love of God that words cannot tell it, while the hatred of herself and of her past life increased so much, that she would willingly have died, if she had thought that so doing she might have pleased God.

And I think that she eagerly desired to take vengeance on herself; and I think she cried aloud: "Oh, wretched and pitiful hound that I am, and worse than a hound, and worse than the unclean swine! Now how much worse than these have I done, O my Lord, in that I have turned to all that Thou dost hold in abhorrence, and delighted therein. What shall I do, I! unhappy one? What revenge can I wreak on myself, sufficient for so many and such offences? Ah, my soul, I cannot take vengeance on *thee*. I cannot chastise thee with my hand, thou who hast consented to so much evil; but I will have vengeance on this body, if my life be long enough."

And I think that she hastily put up her hands and scratched her face until the blood came; and with it the tears started to her eyes, and she cried: "Now, what revenge can I have upon this face, with which I have so much

offended the God in me and in others?" And she put her hands to her hair and tore it out, and tried to bare her head, and she struck her eyes and her face with her fists; and taking a stone she struck herself, on her breast and there where she thought it would not kill her; and she struck her feet, her legs, and her arms, and she clawed herself until the blood came. And she took her girdle with clasps, that she usually wore through vanity, and unclothing herself till she was quite uncovered, she beat herself with it from head to foot until the blood flowed, and she cried: "Take the reward, O my body, of the vain pleasures thou hast frequented." And again she cried; "Alas! this is nothing but the creeping of a fly! Now take that which thou deservest, O my body! But yet must I take comfort, for I feel a desire to kill thee with pain." And again she cried: "Oh, devil, who didst tempt me to folly and to the adorning of my body, to lawlessness, and to other evil things, come now and see if my form please thee!"

And I think that the devil would have answered if he could have heard: "I care nothing for thy body; I only wish that thou

shouldst kill thyself; but I am sore vexed that thou doest this for the love of God, and from repentance of thy sins."

And the Magdalen redoubled her blows, and with weeping and heavy sighs she said to herself: "Oh, dwelling-place of demons, that hast lodged seven for so long a time!"

And ever beating herself, she cried again, saying: "Come, all ye seven devils, and more, and let me suffer all the pains with which ye were expecting to torment me after death; let me suffer them now while I live, and through all the days of my life, if this should be the pleasure of my Lord, for it would be meet that my soul and body should suffer on earth all the pains of hell. Ah, good God! what grace hast Thou given to this vile sinner who has never desired to do penance! Ah! who will give me strength to satisfy myself with pain for the outrage I have done Thee?" And she cried: "Oh, holy angels! why do ye not speed to help me revenge on myself the offences that I have done against your Lord and mine? Why?" And whilst she chastised herself thus grievously, she bade all creatures come and help her to wreak vengeance, the right of the Creator,

upon herself: "Oh, poisonous serpents! Oh, dragons and bears! Oh, every ferocious beast! Now why do ye not come to visit your fierceness on this body, worm that it is, which has flaunted itself in the piazzas of the city, in the churches, in the streets and highways, reviling your Creator and mine, killing the soul with beauty of form and with the vanity thereof, and ye! ye have never offended Him! Oh, sorrowful and guilty sinner, who can make this vengeance great enough? Can it ever be sufficient? No, never! Let heaven and earth, and fire and water, and all the creatures combine to chastise me, and let my Lord preserve me, that I do not therefore die, but suffer a thousand deaths every hour! And even if such punishment endured to the end of the world, still it would not be enough." And she redoubled her lamentations, saying: "Alas! wretched sinner, now hast thou not offended God, who is infinite goodness, and infinite power, and infinite wisdom? Well, therefore thy fault is infinite, since it has offended infinite goodness. Now who could make enough atonement in this life?" And at this she said, with sorrowful tears and deep

sighs: "Behold, Messer! I cannot do that which is due; at least will I do what I can, and visit suffering upon my body whilst I live. And this will I do only for love of God, and for love of His blessed Son, whom He has sent on earth."

For I think that she already discerned in her mind that Christ was the Son of God, though we must believe that the world did not know it yet. And she founded her belief on those words He had spoken of her, that many sins were forgiven her, because she had loved much. And she thought wisely, that were He not God, He could not forgive sins. Wherefore I think that the faith in her heart was already so complete that she truly believed Him to be the Son of God; so she drew greater virtue from the words of Christ than did the Pharisees, who had heard Him even as she had; but the truth abided with her unquestioned, while they were scandalised thereat.

Now Mary Magdalen had disciplined her body so severely that it was bruised and bleeding, and she seemed to have fallen ill, nor could she any longer lift her arms; and she was unconscious of all things round her, but she was

not unconscious of the desire of suffering, rather her wish thereof was more fervent than it had ever been, and thus she spoke to herself: "Now behold, my body, it is thou who hast reviled God everywhere where thou hast been, and I wish to wreak such vengeance on thee, that thou shalt be remembered through all the world, to the honour of Him who has had mercy on me, and has pardoned my fault, that is Christ the blessed Son of God, and to Him be honour and glory throughout all my life; and to thee, my body, be pain and shame and confusion for the past ill life that thou hast led, even if thou shouldst live a thousand years."

And she resolved in her heart that every day, or rather night, she would discipline her body till the blood flowed, as much as she could bear, asking mercy of God. And already she believed that no suffering could be sufficient satisfaction for her sins, except through the mercy of God; and she began to read the "Miserere" and other Psalms that pertain to the asking for mercy, and for fortitude to be able to do great and consummate penance.

Ah, God! how hast Thou changed this

woman, from yesterday morning to this hour, who then was so wicked and in the hands of devils, and who now is entirely in the hands of God and of His angels.

Also I think that the Magdalen resolved in herself to take only bread and water all the days of her life, and to clothe herself as coarsely as she could in rough sackcloth; and, in fine, she had it in her heart to do the contrary of all those things wherein she had found delight when she was vain. And all this she would do according to the will and wisdom of her Master, and as it might be pleasing to Him, for she well thought to say: "I desire and am prepared with Thy help to do such, that I may be amongst Thy elect."

And thus the Magdalen arranged her penance, and far more than we know how to relate, for one finds many, since Christ returned to heaven, who have done of these fierce penances, following the example of Mary and of John the Baptist. And they tell of Saint Benedict, that for an evil thought he would roll amongst the thorns as naked as he was born; and I myself have seen persons who have wrought penances on the body, such

that they are enfeebled, and neither had they committed the multitude of sins told of Mary Magdalen. And this I say, that I do not think it possible to tell, nor even to think how great, was Mary Magdalen's desire and activity to do penance. I think that even as she had abounded in sin and in the vanities of the world, in fond delights and in pleasure in evil, thus and far more without compare did she abound in penance, and, had she been able, she would have borne all the sufferings of this world with consummate joy in virtuous things. And this is not contrary to belief, as was seen afterwards through her works.

And I think that Mary, weeping and sighing, sought amongst her clothes for the most common and the most mournful that she could find, and dressed herself therein; and this seemed to her nothing; rather she intended to buy the roughest and the cheapest garment that she could find in all the city.

And Mary Magdalen came out to know if Lazarus had returned, who had gone to seek Messer Jesus, as we have said above; and let us leave them thus. And the two sisters and Martilla, having met together again, they



Anderson Photo.

THE MAGDALEN

After the painting by Correggio at Dresden

began to talk of Messer Jesus; and their desire to see Him and to speak with Him ever increased.

Now let us tell how he went to Messer Jesus, taking with him several good and wise men, who were older than himself, and other companions and some of his kindred, as was due to him according to the world; and they sought until they found Messer Jesus, and Lazarus went towards Him. And I think that Messer Jesus looked at Lazarus with His most holy eyes, and looked into his soul with immeasurable love; and he threw himself on the ground at Christ's feet with such reverence that he trembled well-nigh from head to foot, and he spoke thus: "Messer, my sisters send me to Thee, beseeching Thy goodness, that Thou wouldst deign to come and lodge to-night in this Thy house, for they greatly need to see Thee and to speak with Thee. I beseech Thy charity, Messer, that Thou wilt not deny me this great grace."

And stooping to earth, he kissed His feet with tears of great devotion. And I think that Messer Jesus, placing His hand on his

head, gave him His blessing, and raised him up, saying: "My peace be with thee in eternity." And I think that He said: "I will not come to you this evening, but to-morrow I will come and eat with you."

And this He did to increase their desire even more. And thus this Master deals with holy souls, for sometimes, because He evades them, so do they go to seek Him all the more ardently and with greater desire.

And Lazarus was not bold enough to say more, save, bowing at His feet: "I give Thee thanks, my Lord."

And the Lord said: "Go in peace."

And Lazarus rose, glad at heart, and went home.

And when those blessed sisters heard him they went to meet him with great eagerness, and said: "Hast thou found the Master?"

And Lazarus answered: "Yes, and I have kissed His feet, and He placed His hand on my head, and gave me His blessing, and He said His peace should be mine to all eternity."

And when they heard that, they threw their arms round his neck, and kissed him with such love that words cannot tell it, and they were in

peace together, and said: "Now are we all three children of the most High Father."

And Lazarus replied: "Well, well. I feel my heart so full of His love, that I could never say how much."

And the blessed Martilla was there, and she regarded them with an unspeakable joy, and, rising, she went to Mary, and she embraced them; and all the household was glad because of their happiness. And they sat down together, and asked Lazarus if the Master would come that evening to lodge with them. And Lazarus replied, and told them word for word all that he had said and done, and also he repeated all the words that Messer Jesus Christ had said, and how He would not come that evening but would come on the morrow.

And they were not cast down, indeed they could not be, for they had no reason; but their desire to see Him was redoubled, and they longed that the hour for dinner next day would come quickly. And they began to consult together of what they should do to receive this most sweet Master; and they arranged the dinner, and invited certain good men, their great friends, who had already prayed Lazarus

that when this Master came, they might see Him and speak with Him. And they cleared and set in order a spacious room, where He might eat with those who desired to be present, and a fair chamber, large and with many beds, where none should enter but He and His disciples, and this house should always be ready for Him in Jerusalem, whenever it pleased Him to return there ; and, moreover, in Bethany they arranged another house that should be for Him, when He willed. Oh, God! what a thing it was to see this blessed family! with what love, and with what longing did they look forward to seeing Messer Jesus in their house, and with what reverence and solicitude!

And they prepared all those things that they thought would most please Him, and they consulted together concerning these matters, and how to have everything done well, and it seemed that none of them remembered either to eat, or drink, or sleep, or to do any of those things usual to them, for their hearts were full of the great tidings they had received of Messer Jesus, and of His love and charity, and they were moved with such devotion, and such love, and such reverence, as no soul could estimate.

And when they had stayed up far into the night, each one went to his room, not to sleep, but to adore God and to praise Him. And the Magdalen, full of contrition, locked herself in, and unclothed herself for the discipline, and gave herself to bitter weeping for her sins and for the time she had lost, and for the good deeds she might have done; and at this she was inspired with such fervour and such hatred of herself, that is, of her vicious life, that her excess of penance was well-nigh to death, and she prayed God to give her strength to bear all the sufferings it is possible to bear in this life. And I think that if Messer Jesus had not moderated her fervour, she would have died of grief when she began to think well on all these things; and I think she cared nothing for sleep.

And in the morning Mary came out to see those things, that they wished to be done for Messer Jesus and His disciples, were being prepared, and they were consumed with longing that He should soon arrive. And Martilla went about the house, and bade set ready the chamber and the beds, where they were to rest after the dinner; and she had the table-cloths and all things else prepared as they should be;

and, moreover, she went to the kitchen to see that they were doing all things well. And the blessed Martha and Mary went about seeing that all was well done, and gladly lending their hands where it was necessary.

Oh, God! what a thing it was to see this blessed family, and with what joy and eagerness they looked forward to seeing Jesus in their house. Blessed were they, who had Him in their hearts, and desired so much to see Him with their eyes, to hear Him with their ears, and to draw near to Him. And God was with them inwardly and outwardly, so that it is no marvel that the Holy Church keeps the festivals of such people; rather it seems to me more marvellous that their feasts are not esteemed much greater, and especially that of Mary Magdalen, who was the beginning of this good to all the others.

And now the hour of dinner, when Messer Jesus was to come, drew near, and Lazarus went out, with a company of others, to watch and see by what road He might come. Mary and Martha had told each one of the household that immediately they saw the Master appear, they should come to warn them.

Mary had already brought with her the box of precious ointment, wherewith to anoint His feet when He had sat down.

And now Messer Jesus arrived, and Lazarus went to meet Him, and prostrating himself on the ground, he kissed His feet, saying and crying: "He has come! I thank thee, Master, that Thou hast deigned to come to the house of Thy servants."

And Messer Jesus raised him with His most holy hand, and gave him peace. And now they went towards the house to the two sisters.

And at this moment Martilla came downstairs, and came out into the piazza, moved with such respect and reverence that she was trembling well-nigh from head to foot, and she threw herself on the ground and kissed His feet. And Messer Jesus bade her rise, and said: "Go, and peace be with thee," and He blessed her.

And now He arrived in the house; and Messer Jesus sat down, and Mary Magdalen knelt, and, taking her box of ointment, anointed the feet of the good Jesus, listening to His words with great reverence. And Martha, kneeling on the other side with great reverence,

was gazing into Christ's countenance, and it seemed to her that she was in Paradise.

And Mary Magdalen kissed these holy feet, and pressed His garment to her face. And when this was done she raised herself on her knees, with clasped hands, thanking Him with reverence for this great courtesy that He should have deigned to come to them.

And the Lord looked benignly upon them, and blessed them, and their love and eagerness increased.

Now the hour came to go to dinner, and Lazarus took water for Messer Jesus to wash His hands, and Mary held the towel, while Martha went to order the preparation of the things to be set before them. And Messer Jesus placed Himself in the centre of the table, and called Lazarus to sit at His side, and then called one of those whom Lazarus had invited—that one to whom He wished to show most favour—and placed him on the other side, and He bade all the others and His disciples seat themselves at the table.

And Mary took Messer Jesus' cup and poured wine therein, and, kneeling by the table, placed it before Him.

Then Jesus, the good Master, humbly took bread, and broke it, and so blessed all the tables, and placed some on one hand and some on the other before those who were near Him.

And Mary, who was reverently standing by, thought in her heart concerning this blessed bread, and said: "Very good! I will take some for myself and for others."

Now Martha came with the trenchers and the dishes, and Mary took one of the dishes and placed it before Messer Jesus, and Martha laid thereon the trencher.[1] And these two sisters stood by Jesus and gazed in His face with such joy and gladness as none can estimate, and thus their souls were nourished, and of corporal food they had no thought; and the good Jesus sustained them sweetly by giving them full consolation. O God! how happy were they! Let us pray them that they make us feel likewise!

When Messer Jesus and the rest had eaten, He and His disciples gave thanks, and the guests went away with gladness in their hearts

[1] Trencher: Italian, *taglieri;* probably the same as the old French, *tranchoirs* or *tranchouers,* i.e. pieces of unleavened bread used as supplementary plates to preserve the metal plates from scratches.

because they had seen the Lord and heard Him speak so sweetly and so piously.

Then He sat down again and began to preach words of salvation. And certain good women had come to hear Him, and they remained a little apart whilst they were eating, and they listened to Him with great devotion; to these women Martha had brought some of the bread the good Jesus had broken with His own hands, and they had eaten a little thereof, and the rest had kept from great reverence.

And when they heard that Christ was preaching, they respectfully begged Martha to ask permission of Messer Jesus for them to listen, and He consented benignly; and I think that they drew near, and, with the rest, experienced perfect happiness.

Oh, what a crowd was out in the piazza, and how many were seeking Him, and were praying those of the household of Lazarus to let them go up to Him; and these would not allow them to pass, for they were bidden let none go up without permission.

And when the benign Master ceased from speaking, Lazarus immediately sent out all the men who were there, and bade his sisters dis-

miss the women, so that the Master might rest with His disciples; and thus it was instantly done, and the Lord entered into the chamber with His disciples, and shut the door.

And Mary, and Martha, and Martilla remained outside, and they kissed the ground where Messer Jesus had placed His feet, and they kissed the bench whereon He had sat, and the table whereat He had eaten, with such fervour and devotion were they moved.

And after this the Magdalen sat, or rather knelt, at the door of the room where Messer Jesus had entered, and nourished her soul with the sweet fragrance that He exhaled, and shed many tears of love and devotion.

And Martha and Martilla went to take leave of those women, and to do the other things necessary, and they felt the greatest happiness to see the Magdalen so fervent and rendering Him such love.

And Lazarus stayed out in the piazza, and he conversed of Christ and of His miracles, and each one recounted what he had heard and seen, and there was great wonder amongst the people.

And Lazarus took leave of them and came into the house, more glad of heart than I can

tell; and he told Martha and Martilla the great things he had heard tell of Him by these people in the piazza. And Mary Magdalen, though she did not rise from the doorway, yet gave ear to what Lazarus was saying, and she listened to him gladly, for the more she heard tell of Christ's goodness the more did her love increase.

And now they bade lock the door, nor open to any one, for they meant to be, all three, together with the Master when He opened the door, that they might receive full consolation from Him; and, moreover, they meant to ask Him what customs and what manner of life they should follow, and also what they should do with their worldly goods, for they desired to do all things according to His wisdom and to His will.

Oh, blessed House! In a happy hour was it built that the Son of God might come thither, clothed in our humanity, Lord of lords, and Lord of all the angels, Saviour and Redeemer of mankind, and of all His disciples whom He has ordained to be celestial princes and princes of all the world. Blessed House, where dwelt that holy family of Mary, and Martha, and

Lazarus, and Martilla, who loved Him with heart and soul, with all force and power and understanding, inwardly and outwardly, for their minds desired no other thought but of Him, and every other thing they thought of seemed to them a toil and a waste; their ears would willingly hear nothing but of Him, nor their tongues speak of other than Him, their eyes desired ever to see Him, and to serve Him, and, were it His will, they would ever follow Him with their feet, never to leave Him or depart from His every pleasure and will.

Oh, household! inwardly, outwardly, full of the grace of God! Oh, household! full of all virtue! Verily was the fire of love in their dwellings! Blessed be the Author thereof!

Now Messer Jesus, knowing their desire, came out of His room and came to them, and He stayed with them with such goodness and gentleness and gladness, that they seemed to be in Paradise; and He commanded them, and answered them, giving them hardihood to say that which they would, without any fear, and with more assurance than they could have done with their earthly father. And Lazarus began to say to the Lord: "Behold, Messer, our

hearts and souls are filled with longing to do Thy will in all things. And we would rather die a thousand times than do anything against Thy wish ; and therefore do with us, with all our possessions, and with all that we can do, according to Thy will, for our peace and happiness in this life is to do that which might please Thee. And therefore, Lord, teach and instruct our household, for we hold that the greatest favour we could have is this—that Thou wouldst receive us to do Thy will, and to hearken to Thy teaching ; and praise and honour be to Thee for all eternity. Command us, govern us, and dispose of us, each one just as Thou wilt, and see with what reverence we kneel before Thee."

And they looked in His face, and pressed close up to Him, as does a little child to his most sweet father, and ever their love grew greater. And I think that Jesus Christ taught them of the kingdom of heaven, and gave them instruction of life, illuminating their minds to understand the highest truth. And I think that at the end of this the good Jesus said : "I wish to give you yet greater confidence in Me ; and to show you full favour

and every grace, I will send for the dearest treasure that I have, that is, My Mother, and I desire that she should lodge and stay with you this evening."

And the good Jesus said this because He knew how the Magdalen and the others wished to see His Mother. At these words the Magdalen was all overjoyed, and she bowed down to the ground to kiss His feet, and most reverently to render Him thanks with all her heart and all her mind, and even so did all the others. And I think that Messer Jesus called two of His disciples, and sent them to pray His Mother with much reverence that it might please her to come to that place where He was.

But meanwhile the Magdalen began to weep bitterly, and she said to herself: "How shall I be bold enough to appear before such purity, for I have heard several times that she has never sinned? And how different has been my life from hers!"

And I think that Messer Jesus looked upon her, and said to her with pity: "Have confidence, my daughter, for neither My Mother nor I will ever remember thy past life."

And now the Mother of Messer Jesus came thither, and He immediately rose to do reverence to His Mother, as He was ever accustomed to do; and the Magdalen lifted her eyes and looked into her face, and behold an arrow entered her heart, of love so unmeasured that she grew dazed, nor did she seem able to go towards her, rather was she like a woman out of her senses. All the others did her great reverence.

And when Madonna perceived her she went towards her, and as one who was most humble of heart, bent over her and kissed her forehead, saying: "Peace be with thee, my blessed daughter. Comfort thee, for I desire that it may be well with thee in all things; blessed be my Son who has done this good thing to thee."

And Messer Jesus and His Mother, who gave of their sweetness, sat down, and all the others gathered reverently round them, and they pressed close to the Mother with intimacy.

Now here will I make no more words, for truly poverty-stricken must be that soul who cannot imagine this noble company as it was at that moment. I think that the Magdalen

and the rest might have said to Him, as Peter said on the Mount: "Master, let us make here three tabernacles."

And the good Jesus began to speak and to teach them, and He gave them knowledge of all perfection, for they were the good earth that should bring forth fruit an hundred-fold.

And when they had been thus for a while the good Jesus said He would go to the Temple to preach; and verily do I think that He prayed His Mother to remain with this blessed family until the morrow, for she could abide safely in this house, and return thither whensoever she would. And this holy family felt such joy at these words as none could estimate; and Our Lady looked at her sacred Son, for I think she wished to know from Him if these people were such that she could tell the truth concerning Him, for it was not yet told openly to every one, but only to those whom He Himself knew who would receive it faithfully as truth.

I think Messer Jesus gave her ample permission.

Then Messer Jesus went out and went to the Temple with His disciples, and the dear

Magdalen followed Him to the outer door, kissing the ground where He had placed His feet; and the good Jesus turned when He was on the threshold, and gave her His blessing, and bade her go and stay with Madonna. And immediately she did so; and Lazarus went away with Messer Jesus.

When Magdalen reached Madonna she threw herself prostrate at her feet, with so many tears, that none could tell of them, deeming herself unworthy to see her or to be in her presence when she remembered her past evil life, and considered the purity and holiness of Our Lady; and therefore she was more grateful than words can say. And Our Lady, benign and pitiful, raised her up and bade her sit close by her; and Martha and Martilla likewise pressed close up to her, and they stayed beside her with such eagerness that I could never tell of it.

And Our Lady began to speak to them of the doctrine of life, words all sweet and honeyed, and full of charity and love; and this blessed family found such delight in seeing and hearing her that they forgot that they were in this world.

Now we can imagine if they supped and

what a supper was that, and what was the service and manner thereof. Now which amongst them remembered to sleep, or gave a thought thereto, for their minds had entered into a paradise of delight, and there they pastured so sweetly that their bodies could not do as was customary.

And I think that Our Lady told them of the incarnation of her Son, and of the angel's words, and her own that she replied, and how in every way God had supported her through it all; and then how she had gone to Elizabeth, who had recognised the Son of God in her womb before any other on earth, and of all the words they had spoken together; and then how He was born, and the angels descended from eternal life to sing "Gloria in Excelsis" round that manger where she had laid Him; how it was announced to the shepherds, and how the magi came from the East, and how they were guided by a star, and how they came to adore Him; how she took Him to the Temple, where Simeon prophesied concern-Him, and how God wished her to fly with Him into Egypt; in fact, of all her life, and of everything that had happened to her up to

that day, expounding to them the prophecies, and all that had been foretold by the Holy Prophets up to that day. And excellently did they comprehend, and they received these words with such delight and such faith that had they been there to see these things they could not have been more certain thereof; and only think how it must have been with them then!

Now I think that Madonna, as one full of perfect discretion which never forsook her in anything, desired that they should sleep a little. Now think, thou who readest, in what manner she must have lain down to sleep, and with what respect they gathered round her, to settle her, and to cover her, and how they did all they could, because of their hearts' longing, divining what she might need. And I think that the Magdalen could not sleep; on the contrary, she lingered talking of those things that she had heard with such delight and such gladness that she did not remember, or even give a thought to anything that had happened before. And I think that she did not discipline herself that night, for it escaped her memory, so much was she exalted by these

most noble things that she had heard, and wherein she rejoiced more than words can say; and Martha did likewise, and also Martilla believed faithfully, and she was glad because of these things.

In the morning Our Lady wished to go to the temple of God to hear and see her Son, for when she was in those parts where He was she must needs see and hear Him every day. I do not think, however, that she followed Him in body to every place, but in spirit, and thus she never left Him.

And I think Martha and Mary went with her, with the intention of never leaving her; but Our Lady, who was most wise, and knew what was to be done and what her Son wished, would sometimes send Martha home when it was time, for she knew what Martha had to do, and what her Son wished her to do; and sometimes she also sent back Mary, but I think that most often she kept Mary with her. And these two obeyed her without any opposition of word or will, but they esteemed themselves happy if they could do what might please the Son and His Mother. And so also Messer Jesus sometimes sent away Lazarus,

and this is well proved when Lazarus was sick to death, for then he was not with Him in body.

Now what a privilege it was to this blessed household that they should have given themselves up to Messer Jesus, and that He and His Mother should have received them; and He instructed and commanded them what they should do in all things, both great and small, nor was anything done without His permission.

Oh, household full of grace! in this lies all the New Testament. One cannot find in the Scriptures another such a family; for of Lazarus it is written that he was in truth the friend of God, that is, of Jesus Christ; and of Martha it is said that she was in truth the hostess of Jesus, and this is the name that is given her in the Church of God. There were many others who gave Him shelter, but they had not therefore this title; and Mary Magdalen, whom He loved more than any other woman in the world, save the Virgin Mary, was called the disciple of Messer Jesus. Now what a thing is this to think of, and what more could one say of this blessed household, who so liberally and faithfully gave

themselves up to do His pleasure. And thus, according to my fancy, came about the first friendship that the Lord Jesus and His Mother gave to the household of this blessed family. And also I think that there was no house in the world, since He began to preach, where He might lodge and stay in person as freely as He did in their house. Therefore, as it was told above, Martha is so called as one keeping a hospice for Christ.

It is not to be thought that the house of this blessed family was the only inn where Christ lodged, which, if it was for Him, was for His Mother also; and it is not to be thought that this name—that is, the hostess of Christ—is given to Martha throughout all the Church, and throughout all the world, because He stayed with her one evening, or two, or ten ; but I think that when He was in Judea He rarely lodged elsewhere than with this blessed family ; for everything there was His, their souls, their bodies, their houses, and their possessions, all they could do and give, inwardly and outwardly, with love and generosity, more than one could ever tell or estimate.

Well ! let us speak of Martha, who was the

youngest of these three, and had fewer years and less health, for she had been very ill. She was the first of them who received Christ, and was the instrument and cause that her brother and sister received Christ likewise; and this she had brought about with alms and prayers and many words, because as she felt herself healed in soul and body by Messer Jesus, the highest Physician, therefore she strove that her brother and sister should also be made whole; and that grace which she felt in herself, she wished also for them, as if for herself, handmaid of Christ, who resembled Madonna, since she desired that all human nature might know the good that God had done to the world, when He sent His own Son to redeem us, and wrest us out of the hands of devils. Oh, most blessed Martha!

Thus the youngest daughter, according to the flesh, became the eldest according to grace, and by virtue of faith and of charity.

Thou hadst been ill, and with less bodily strength than Mary or Lazarus; but thou didst become healthy and strong before them, preceding them in body and soul, so that all else was left behind thee, thou the occasion

of their well-being, of their vigour of body and soul! Oh, how much must they have loved this sister, and how brightly were they enlightened with the light of truth. Nor will I forget Martilla, who was the first instrument of thy faith, and together with thee of that of the others. Blessed be the Son of God who deigned to complete in ye all a work so beautiful.

Now it is left to the devout soul to imagine how often, when in Judea, Messer Jesus and His Mother went to stay in the house of these people, and how they were continually with them, either in Jerusalem or in Bethany.

The Magdalen stayed with Our Lady, and Lazarus ever followed Jesus; Martha more often remained at home, and for the greater part in Bethany, and she was the overseer of all those things that were needful, and especially those for the poor, and, moreover, she did what she could with her hands nor was she ever idle, and she became as a mother to all the poor in the countryside, for the good Jesus wished her to act thus. Though she, for choice, would fain have stayed with Him, yet it pleased her more to do that which He

commanded; wherefore she became the comforter of all the afflicted and sorrowful, of widows, of children, and the infirm. Wherever she knew of any in need of help she succoured them with temporal things, and preached to them and converted them to the faith of Christ with a sweet, consoling speech, which seemed to refresh both body and soul; and I think that she sent those who were ill of divers sicknesses to Messer Jesus, and taught them to have faith, and how to ask reverently for mercy.

And I think that Messer Jesus would receive them benignly and tenderly, and would heal them all, and He rejoiced in this His blessed child, when He saw her work with Him thus solicitously. Then those who had been ill would return to Saint Martha, thanking her and rendering her honour more than could be told; but the blessed Martha would not permit this, but led them back to Christ that they should thank Him. And she filled her house with the poor and sick, as many as could enter there, ministering to them, and helping them with her own hands, and she did for them that which was needful; and

she did likewise for those who were outside, whom the house could not contain. Oh, blessed Martha, which amongst them was sorrowful, and thou, wast not sorrowful too with true compassion?

And the blessed Martilla went continually round about, taking alms and comforting and helping each one with what he stood in need of, teaching the faith of Christ, and so sweetly that all rejoiced in their hearts.

And I think that Messer Jesus came often to Bethany to lodge with Martha; and when Martilla heard He was coming she went amongst the sick crying and saying, "Cry ye for mercy, for behold the Physician, Messer Jesus, comes!"

And first she instructed them well in His faith, so that when Messer Jesus entered, they cried all with one voice: "Have mercy, Son of David, have mercy on us, for love of Thy blessed Martha, and of our Merciful Mother." And they shed tears of great devotion. And Messer Jesus came amongst them, and He rejoiced in a household such as this, and He asked them: "Have ye faith and do ye believe that I can heal ye?"

And they all cried with one voice: "Yes, Messer."

And our Lord replied: "Rise and be ye healed, and go ye to seek the kingdom of heaven."

And they arose, healed and saved, and they threw themselves at His feet, asking His blessing.

And Messer Jesus stayed with Martha as long as He would, and when He went away, Martha would fill the house again with the sick and the poor. Ah, how beautiful it was to see Martha teaching this people she had received into her house, making them say psalms and prayers, and take comfort in the praising of God as much as they could; and she bade them have patience, and bear this weariness willingly as the remedy of their sins: "If ye do well, and will have faith, this next time the Master comes, He will heal you, as He has done to these others."

And they received these words with joy, and all the day they praised God, and those who did not know how, came to be taught. And when Messer Jesus returned He again unpeopled the house; and I think He did this very often.



Mansell Photo.

CHRIST APPEARING TO THE MAGDALEN

After the painting by Titian in the National Gallery

And the good women of that hamlet came to help Martha serve the poor and sick, to sweep the house, and make the beds, to wash their heads and feet, and to minister to all as if they were their children. And Martha permitted them very willingly, and urged them to arrange beds in their own houses, and to give shelter to the poor and sick as much as lay in their power, for so doing they would gain the kingdom of heaven; and there were many who did as she said, and all the country-side was converted to the faith of Christ through the preaching of this blessed Martha, through her sweet speech, and through the many good deeds they saw her do. And, moreover, there were many rich who, being ill, asked for the grace of coming to lie in Martha's house, to be cured with the others when Jesus came; and so it was done.

And thus all those of that village were converted to the faith of Christ, and the blessed Martha often prayed Christ for them that He would keep them firm in their faith, that they might bring forth fruit for life.

And the fame of St. Martha's works, and of the manner of life she led, began to spread

through all the country round, and all Judea; so that all the poor and sick directed their steps to Bethany, and those that could not walk were carried, and they fled hither as if to a haven, for they knew that Christ often came there, and they could not follow Him everywhere, for sometimes when they thought He was in one place, He was in another, but they went to Bethany for they were sure He would come thither; and we must suppose that since they could not all be lodged in Martha's house, many good men and women must have received them under their roof, and ministered to them and helped them diligently, and when the Lord came, He healed them and they left these houses, and sometimes He would heal all in the village who were brought before Him.

And the wonder at so many miracles and good deeds was such, that the devotion of the people in that hamlet was more than one could relate.

And I think that Martha often preached the doctrine that she had learnt from the lips of Christ, and I think that she herself often wrought miracles, for sometimes the Lord was

very far away from that country-side, and in some people the necessity was so great that it seemed they could not wait, so with prayers and the sign of the Holy Cross she released them. Moreover, her legend tells how she cured the sick with that same herb which the Scripture says she planted in the garden, in order to recall to mind Messer Jesus when she could not see Him; so that amongst those women who have done works of mercy, this was the most gracious that could ever be found in all the world. And I think that she worked without stint, and in desire she wrought even more than in deed; for she would fain have clothed all the naked in the world had she been able, to feed the hungry, to visit and care for all the sick and poor in the world, and for all the needy amongst human-kind had she been able; and this, moreover, seemed but little to her, for she thought that more was due from her, for love of God who created her, and for love of His blessed Son incarnate who redeemed human nature. And why should I not believe this of Martha, this and much more which I know neither how to think nor say? Now is not the banner and the patron-

age of the active life given to her throughout all Christianity, and throughout all the Church of God? And it is these things which all must needs do if they would lead the good active life; now because it is to her that is given the banner and the patronage of this precept, therefore it was incumbent on her to do more than all others that have ever lived.

And this say the Saints, that the active life is represented by Martha. Now was there ever any one, who, shaking himself free of the world and wishing to begin to do penance, was not, at the first step, obliged to follow under this banner? And do not take it amiss that the Magdalen, when she began to do penance, disciplined her body and desired to outrage herself with every harshness in her way of life; for is not this also a part of the active life denoted by this banner? Now are there none but works of mercy in the active life? No, indeed! rather there is another virtue together with these same, that is, every act of penance done with a pure intention; and I have never understood that any could attain to the contemplative life, however complete it be, without first passing through the active life. Therefore,

if this title is given to Martha, she must needs have been a very Martha in her works.

And therefore I think that Martha must have been the most perfect woman in the active life that there has ever been, especially in her actions and in her eagerness. I think that Our Lady was far greater beyond compare, but it is not told that she did much in outward works as did Martha, for she was entirely contemplative.

So I think Martha had a great longing to do almost an infinity of works of mercy, more than could ever be achieved, and I think that very often, both day and night, she would wonder how she could do more, for she perceived that love of our neighbour was very pleasing to God. And the good God who had chosen her for an example to all the world, ever urged her on to labour, and fanned her desire. And I think that when she ministered to the sick, and clothed the poor, and did the other merciful works, it seemed to her that she had Christ Himself in her hands, as He had said with His own lips: "When ye do thus to the poor, ye do it unto Me."

And therefore Martha was solicitous in as

far as she was able, pondering how she might best do, and have done these works of mercy, so that it is not without reason that the patronage of the active life is given her in the Church.

And I think that the Magdalen was continually with Madonna when Messer Jesus was in those districts; for she knew well that she would receive more abundantly of His grace when she was with His Mother than in any other place, and, moreover, she delighted exceedingly in being with her. And I think that Messer Jesus went sometimes to preach in distant regions, for He went to divers places; and I think He did not desire that His Mother and the Magdalen should follow Him very far, nor go amongst many people; for it seems that it is not meet for those dedicated to contemplation to go much hither and thither, and He wished that they should give a real example; so that when He had gone elsewhere, the Magdalen asked leave of Madonna to go to Bethany, to see how Martha fared, and Our Lady blessed her, and bade her go in peace.

And now the Magdalen returned to Bethany,

and Lazarus with her, because she had thought that they would converse all together. When the Magdalen had arrived in Bethany to consult with her sister Martha how they might do more and do better, their joy to find themselves together was very great.

And all three being thus gathered together in order to speak of Messer Jesus and of what might please Him, the Magdalen said: "I have come to speak of many things which we must needs do to please our Master, who bids each one do thus and thus." Then she said: "The other day a young man came to Him and said, 'Master, what shall I do to obtain eternal life?' And the Master said, 'Obey the commandments.' And he said, 'I have done so. What remains still for me to do?' And the Master replied and said, 'If thou wilt be perfect, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor.'"

Then Martha, eager to do that which pleased Him, answered gladly: "Let it be done." And she said: "And there is yet a greater precept that thou hast not mentioned, for I was at that sermon when He said, 'Whosoever does not renounce father, mother, brother, and sister,

and home, that is, all temporal goods, and also himself, cannot be My disciple.'" And Lazarus said likewise.

Then said the Magdalen: "Oh, brother! how thou hast delayed to say this."

And Lazarus replied: "We have never before been together talking of Him."

And they said: "Now do we not desire to be His disciples?"

And they answered "Yes" with all their hearts. And they spoke together of how they should liberate their vassals, and of making them free, of renouncing the lordship of the lands they held, and then of selling all their possessions to give to the poor.

Then the sweet Magdalen answered that even thus it ought to be; "But let us wait for the Master that we may know if He wishes it done thus." And so they remained together, and they found far more gladness in casting away all temporal things than the avaricious of this world can have in taking of such and possessing them. And this they did in order to be the disciples of the true Master, children of the true Father, and servants of the all-powerful Lord.

And they stayed together with much gladness, ever talking of Messer Jesus and of His Mother, of His teaching, of His great miracles, and of all the other things that they knew of Him; and with this food were their souls nourished, and ever they saw that all was done, which was necessary for the poor and the sick; and so doing, they looked forward gladly to the return of Messer Jesus that they might speak with Him of that which they had deliberated together. And Messer Jesus, who knew all their desire, returned with His disciples, and came straight to them in Bethany, and found them all three together. And I think this was that time when it is said: "Intravit Jesus in quoddam castellum," &c.

And when Messer Jesus came to the gate, I think that certain beggars, who were there asking alms, recognised the Lord, and immediately ran to Martha to do her pleasure, for she was a mother to them all, and they told her how the Master had entered in at the gate. Then when Mary and Martha heard this news, they went out with joy and gladness of heart beyond estimation, and went to meet Him, and they threw themselves at His feet with

much reverence, and the Lord received them tenderly and gladly, and they rejoiced together, and His disciples came with them to their house. And first, according to His custom, He went to visit the poor and sick who were harboured therein, and He blessed them all, and immediately He cured them; and to those who were poverty-stricken I think He gave what was needful, so that all might dwell happily in their homes.

Ah, how wisely did our Lord act, for throughout that day and evening and night He desired that this blessed family should have no other thought nor care save to minister to Him and to His disciples, and to hear His doctrine with free minds. And it happened as the Gospel relates:

Mary sat at His feet and listened to His words, and gazed up into His face; and in this she found such delight and happiness as none could imagine, and she forgot all other created things. And Martha was anxiously ordering all that she had to do, and that which had to be made, or rather prepared for the supper; and she did all with such pleasure and such love that it seemed to her nothing

compared with what she thought she ought to do, for her eagerness was much greater than what she could achieve. Still Martha had a great deal to do; and I think that she had sent many messages to certain good and devout women of that neighbourhood, and also to certain good and devout men, well instructed in the doctrine and the faith of Christ, and these sent to Martha, saying that they wished to come to see and hear Messer Jesus. But I think she replied "No," for she wished Him to rest that evening with His disciples, and that the morrow they might come to Him for consolation, if so it pleased Him.

Also Martha prudently considered how she and her brother and sister wished to tell Him of the resolutions they had taken together to bestow all their temporal goods, as it has been told before, according to His will and pleasure; and Mary had none of these thoughts, and for the time being she remembered nothing, for she was so intent upon His words; but to Martha, who was of the active life, these cares and this forethought were meet; they were good and holy, and very pleasing to the Lord, for she worked prudently for herself and for

others. So I think Martha, full of gladness, went about the house, bidding the servants to what had to be done, answering the messengers that came, and doing all things perfectly; and whilst she went about the house, she watched her sister the Magdalen, who was sitting thus rapt at the feet of Christ, and perceived well that she was thinking of nothing else. And I think to myself when Martha saw her sister saved from so much evil, and brought to so much good, a great happiness entered her heart; and I think she was giving thanks for this with all her heart as she went about the house.

I think Lazarus stayed with the disciples.

Martilla rejoiced to see all these things; and the rest of the household likewise were glad of heart.

And I think that Martha wisely wished to hear the Master speak, and to know what He thought of her loved sister, and what He would say, because she was so intent to hear His words that she thought of nothing else. And I think she would fain know if it were better to do thus, and therefore she said: "Dost thou not see, Master? command her to help me."

And our Lord answered those words which

are in the Gospel, praising Martha for her good carefulness, and that such was necessary to our salvation, for so it is laid down in the Gospel, and the commandments of the Holy Gospel are necessary to our salvation.

And it seems to be a general rule, that one must first begin with the active life, in order to attain to the contemplative. And if only those of the contemplative life were saved, few indeed would have salvation; nevertheless it is the best life; but the active life is of greater use, as He Himself said.

And I think that Martha was content with these words, and she was happier than any could tell to see her sister established in safety, and hearing the Lord say: "She has chosen the best part, which shall never be taken from her in eternity." And surely this was the love of charity which rejoices in the good of others, as in that of self. And, moreover, Martha's happiness was redoubled, because she had seen her lately sunk in such evil, and now she saw her lifted to such virtue.

I think that a devout soul would have found this house a goodly dwelling-place wherein was every good, and where lodged the Master

of all virtue and wisdom. And think of the words that were spoken there, and what exceeding joy they had together, these people who were so united and in such charity to each other, and who saw Him, whom they loved so much, demean Himself so graciously there amongst them, and think with what happiness they prepared this feast.

And I think when it was time to go to supper, Lazarus knelt reverently at the feet of the Lord, and said: "Messer, if Thou wilt sup, all is ready."

And immediately Lazarus arose and fetched the water, and Magdalen the towel, and thus they offered it to Messer Jesus, and the Lord rose and took the water.

And Martha placed the wine on the table, that He might give the blessing.

Now what a thing it is to think of that devout benediction, and of Him who blessed the things!

And after this Messer Jesus sat down amongst His disciples, and Lazarus and Martha brought the things to table. Mary did not move away from the table, but took the bowl for the Lord and placed it before

Him, and she took His cup and filled it with wine, and she gazed at Him with such love and reverence as none could tell; and she was on fire with love, and ever knelt when she placed something before Him, and so did the others, just as it is usual to do to emperors.

And thus this supper was accomplished with such devotion as none could estimate, and Messer Jesus rose from the table, and so did all the others. And when the grace was said they sat down, and He began to preach to them and to announce the kingdom of heaven. And then I think it pleased Jesus that all those devout people who desired to see and hear Him should come in; and Mary Magdalen placed herself forthwith at His feet, and she cared nothing for any other supper, for she was abundantly nourished with the word of God. And the Lord remained with them some while, preaching and announcing their salvation and the life of true perfection.

And when Messer Jesus had stayed as long as He deemed meet, He arose, and with His disciples withdrew to His room, where He was accustomed to rest, and the Magdalen followed Him with much reverence and knelt

before Him, and said: "Master, we would tell Thee certain things. When wilt Thou that we should return to Thee?"

And the gentle Master, full of care for them, said: "Go and send away these people; then go ye to sup, and afterwards come back to me." And immediately it was done as He bade.

And the people departed full of love and devotion; and these three remained. And they set themselves to sup, but I think that scarcely could they take any corporal food, so satiated were they inwardly and outwardly with all consolation and devotion. And they arose from the table and went to their Master, and sat at His feet.

And the Magdalen, being older than the others, began to speak, and I think she said thus: "Dearest Master, we would fain speak with Thee: Thou knowest that these temporal things are ours, and in great abundance, and it seems to us great toil and loss of time to take care for them; nevertheless, we desire that Thy pleasure should be done before all things else; and therefore speak but the word, and we are ready to do Thy will; and herein lies

all our happiness and content, if only we can do what may please Thee."

Then the benign Messer Jesus blessed them, and He said that indeed He wished them to renounce everything completely as He had preached oftentimes; and He told them how He wished them to sell everything and give to the poor; and moreover He told them what way they should do it, and how they should choose certain virtuous and trusty persons to sell these things, so that too much care should not fall to them; and I think He showed forth to them the manner of life that they should follow, so that they were fully satisfied and joyful.

Now think, my soul, what joy and happiness there was in this blessed family because Messer Jesus and His disciples were lodging with them. Think with what great gladness Martilla made hot the water, and how Lazarus, with some of the most devout of the household, went to wash first the feet of Messer Jesus and then those of His disciples! And the Magdalen! What was she doing? How she longed to wash the feet of Christ, which she had already bathed with the tears of her

eyes! And Jesus did not permit her this time, so that she might give an example of modesty to women through all time to come until the end of the world, for He knew all things.

And I think that Messer Jesus stayed with them some days, finding gladness and consolation, both with this blessed family and with the other people of that hamlet.

And think how intimately and how sweetly the Lord held converse with them, and He gave more of His consoling grace than He had ever given before. And I think He sent for His Mother from Jerusalem, so that together with her their festival might be the greater. And when Messer Jesus had stayed so long as it pleased Him, He went away to preach in Jerusalem, and His Mother went with Him, but He wished that the Magdalen should stay together with the others, to accomplish that which He had bidden them do.

And Magdalen and Lazarus arose, and went to her castle called Magdalo, and immediately they assembled a council, and all those stewards who served them, and they desired that these should arrange a general council of all the

people on the land. And the following day when these people were gathered together, Magdalen and Lazarus went amongst them, and with many good, friendly, and devout words, they renounced the lordship of the land, saying that they would no longer retain them as servants, but esteem them as brothers and dear friends ; and with these words they began to tell them how Messer Jesus, the Teacher of Truth, desired that all dominion, that is, dominion of this world, should be given up, in order to possess the kingdom of heaven ; and she began to preach His doctrine so sweetly, and with such fervour, that these people all wept for devotion, and they began to cry with one voice, saying : " Magdalen, do not leave us, for now we will be more faithful and better servants than ever before."

And the Magdalen said she could not keep them any more under her rule, " but I wish through the love of charity to be your daughter and servant, and especially if ye will follow the teaching of my Master."

And they all with one voice cried that they would follow Him with all their hearts. And the Magdalen returned to her house, and all

the good people, men and women, escorted her thither and went with her, and she preached to them and taught them so sweetly, that their hearts were inflamed with the love of Messer Jesus; and she assembled her stewards and bade them represent to her all the temporal things that were hers, and she liberated every one, providing largely for each one of them, and then she had all sold, even to the household goods, and the price given to the poor of the land and of the district.

And I think she stayed yet a little longer amongst them, preaching the doctrine of Christ with humility and gentleness, recounting His miracles, and preparing them for the faith.

And I think that all the people of that country-side were drawn to her, some for alms, and some to see the great change God had wrought in her, and to hear her sweet speech; so that all those people were converted, and many men and women from those parts arose and went with great fervour to see Messer Jesus, and to hear Him preach. And I think the Magdalen chose certain virtuous men, their great friends, dwelling on the

land, and she and Lazarus deputed them to sell their possessions, which we must believe to have been very great, and bade them take the price to Martha in Bethany.

And when they had arranged and done all these things, they desired to return to Bethany; and before they went they assembled all the good people of the land men and women, who humbly prayed her to remain on her estate as she had done hitherto; and more, for they wished to be as her children, more faithful and more active in her service than ever before, and they begged that she would commend them to her Master, for they all wished to be His. And the Magdalen received them gladly, and she showed that these words pleased her much, especially when they spoke of her Master; and all these good people accompanied her a long way beyond her lands, and some of the most afflicted went with her even to Bethany. And when they had come thither, they assembled all the good people of the property, and did here as they had done at the castle of Magdalo. And so they chose deputies to sell all their possessions that were outside the city of Jerusalem, or wherever they had them.

And I think that there was such wonderment in all the country-side concerning this matter, that people scarce gossiped of aught else. And so they came all three to Jerusalem to accomplish this renunciation; and this they did because the third part of Jerusalem was theirs, through their father.

And we can imagine that many of their prudent kindred and friends wished to hinder them, saying: "What folly is this? and why do ye act thus?"

And hearing what they had done with their lands outside the city, and their other possessions, they marvelled much, and were troubled thereat, for through them they were great and esteemed, and they thought it degraded them to be thus deprived both of their kindred's influence and wealth.

And the Magdalen, as one with a great heart, spoke to them so sweetly, and with such fair arguments, that she made them all rest content. And I think that some amongst these were converted when they heard her speak so nobly of disdaining the world, and concerning the virtues, and of things divine; but there were some who made mock of it,



Anderson Photo.

THE MAGDALEN

After the painting by Giampetrino at Milan

and were vexed thereat, and this same thing would happen even to-day.

And they chose deputies to sell certain houses and gardens and fair grounds which they owned in the city, and they ordained that the price should be given to certain virtuous people, who would distribute it to the poor, for the Magdalen wished not to have to think of these things, rather did she wish to think only of Christ and His law, and to abide with His Mother in peace and tranquillity of heart and mind.

And this being done, Martha returned to Bethany to do her work for the poor, and the Magdalen remained with Madonna, and Lazarus was with Messer Jesus almost all the time that He stayed in that district, and great was the wonder throughout all the city concerning this true-hearted family who had thus stripped themselves of the world ; and I think that through their example and words, many were converted and followed Messer Jesus.

Martha, like a great baroness, stayed in Bethany, and one day she would receive the price of this possession, and the morrow, that of another, and she gave thereof to the poor

and sick, and wherever she heard there was need, throughout all that country-side, and ever she set her mind to preach the doctrine of Christ and His miracles, and many were converted through her fair speech and great alms.

And we can well believe that these possessions were so many that they were not quickly made an end of, and maybe they lasted for some years, so that there was plenty to give away.

So this blessed maiden dwelt there alone, ever thinking how to do what might please the good Jesus in every way; and of their houses in Jerusalem they kept those that He wished kept, and in that place which pleased Him; and this they did, not for the sake of keeping them, for they meant to sell them after all the others, but by this means to have somewhere whither Messer Jesus might lodge in security, He and other devout followers of the Lord, who perhaps were strangers, and had no place to turn to, so that these houses were somewhat after the manner of a hospital which gives shelter to good Christians. And I think that when the Lord was in the city He often came back

thither when He was in need of food; and this was a great happiness and consolation to the devout, who had taken up their abode there.

Now the time drew near when Messer Jesus was to die for our salvation, and the impiety of the Scribes and Pharisees had much increased, for since all the people believed in Him, they perceived that their influence had diminished, and they came about the high priests of the temple with cunning counsels, seeking to discover a way to destroy Messer Jesus and His doctrine on earth. And they thought that if they could kill Him, His power would be quenched; but they did not know the secrets of God, nor were they worthy to know them, for they were false hypocrites, and they scorned Him, and slandered His every word and deed, so that it began to be known through all the city that His actions displeased them.

And it seemed that Messer Jesus had reserved for this time greater miracles and more manifest than any He had ever wrought, as that of him born blind, which was manifest and much scrutinised by the elders of the

Temple, as it is told in the Gospel, and that of him who had been for thirty-eight years at the well, and that of Lazarus, which we shall relate before long, who had been for four days in the sepulchre.

And in those days Messer Jesus, while preaching, spoke those words which are recounted in the Holy Gospel, how, when they would have stoned Him, and Messer Jesus escaped their fury, it was because His time had not yet come. And He descended with His disciples into the region of the Jordan, and the Magdalen remained almost always with Madonna; but still when Messer Jesus went elsewhere, she asked leave of Madonna to go and visit Martha in Bethany. And I think that sometimes Madonna went with her, and there they would rest well.

This time Mary Magdalen and Lazarus went to Bethany, and they all three stayed there together, continually thinking and talking of Messer Jesus, and of the snares that had been laid for Him, and that were still being prepared against Him; and they were much afraid therefore, because they knew the great envy these men bore towards Him.

And being thus together, they did virtuous works, pleasing to God and to their neighbours, and they lived with much usefulness of word and deed, filling their house with the poor and sick who came from afar, and they preached to all who came, bringing them to the faith of Christ, and they ministered to them, and bade others serve them, as if they had all been sons and brothers; and all for love of the good Jesus, who had bidden them see Himself in the person of the poor.

And at this time, being thus together, Lazarus fell ill. These two sisters loved him dearly, because he was so good, and because they knew that Messer Jesus loved him dearly, and they ministered to him diligently and tenderly; and immediately they began to question if they should send for Messer Jesus, who would heal him at once, and all the others. They knew well why He had left them, and they feared greatly lest some new thing had been worked against Him; and the illness grew ever greater, so that the physicians despaired. Then these two sisters wrote to Messer Jesus with that great tenderness born of love, to say that Lazarus was sick unto

death. However, they did not tell Him to come, but from veneration to Him they were fain to write the matter as it was. And they sent a very faithful messenger and friend of Messer Jesus to deliver the letter into His own hand, and one who would not reveal to others where he had found Him, nor where He might be. And when Messer Jesus had read the letter, He said that this matter would be for the glory of God; and He sent comforting them, saying that He had not forgotten him. And I think that when the messenger had returned, Lazarus was dead, but nevertheless they took great comfort in their hearts from these words of Messer Jesus, and they thought that some great deed would be wrought for the glory of God through this matter, because of these words that Christ had spoken; but they did not know the manner thereof. And Lazarus being dead, the mourning was very great, and people arrived from all parts, and especially from Jerusalem; and we must suppose that though this household was made mock of by some, nevertheless, because of their greatness and nobleness, they were in high repute in the world, and they had many kin-

dred; wherefore the people who came thither were so many that it was a wonder to see.

And I think that these women wept sadly and bitterly, and their grief was so much greater because the Master was not there, and Lazarus had not seen Him during this illness before he died; for he had longed for Him, and had called Him, because of the great longing he had to see Him and to be consoled by Him before he died. And the mourning was greater than any could tell amongst all the household, and his friends, and kindred, and all of the land and region around; and the household, with many other people, were clothed in black for deep mourning.

And at the end of four days, behold Messer Jesus arrived at the gate of the hamlet of Bethany, and He did not enter in, but sent to the house to say that He had come.

And I think that Martha, as that one who was in request whatever had to be done, had risen from Mary's side for some reason, and Mary was in the great hall, where there were so many people that it could scarcely contain them.

When Martha heard that the good Jesus

had come, she did not think of Mary, but immediately she ran to Him outside the gate, and, finding Him, she threw herself on the ground at His feet with a great cry, and said: 'Messer, if Thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died."

And Messer Jesus answered and said: "I will raise him."

And Martha said: "I know well, Messer, that he will rise again at the last judgment."

And Messer Jesus, seeing that she did not understand Him, said: "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believes in Me, *non morietur in æternum*," and those other words which are recounted in the Holy Gospel. And He asked her if she believed in Him, and she, inwardly illuminated by those words of Christ far more than ever before, answered and said: "I believe that Thou art Christ the Son of God, who hast come into the world."

Oh, woman of great price, thou didst confess this truth even as Peter confessed, and maybe sooner than he did, and it is not found that thou didst deny Him, but rather thy noble love and great faith ever increased.

And I think she asked the Lord if He would come in and rest.

The sweet Master replied, and bade her fetch Mary Magdalen, nor would He enter then. Martha went swiftly, and coming to the Magdalen she whispered in her ear that the Lord had come and had sent for her, and Mary straightway arose; and those people who were there had not heard Martha's speech, but thought she was going to the sepulchre where Lazarus was laid to renew her weeping, so that when these sisters went out thus swiftly every-one followed them, and both the strangers and the people of that neighbourhood joined in the movement. I say they went out, that is, outside the hamlet where Messer Jesus was waiting for them, for in those days the sepulchres were made outside the estates.

And when the loving Magdalen came to Messer Jesus, with a great cry she threw herself on the ground and kissed His feet, saying the words that Martha had said; and the weeping and lamentation of Martilla and of those of the household, and of the kindred and friends, when they saw the good Jesus, was so great that it seemed that all the world wept

and mourned afresh with Him, for their brother and His friend.

And when the benign Lord saw this so great grief, and looked at His disciple the Magdalen who was so sorrowfully weeping, He likewise began to weep as one who is full of pity, and raising her from the ground, He said: "Where have ye laid him, for I would go and see."

And these two sisters very willingly set out with Him. He walked between the two, comforting them and saying that they must not weep the death of the virtuous; and He said: "Be sure, I have come to console ye."

And they thanked Him gratefully, and said: "Master, it is very true, for we are already much consoled."

The people marvelled and said; "See, how He loves this family;" but some others murmured thereat.

And when they had reached the sepulchre, Messer Jesus bade them lift the stone. And Martha placed herself in front of Him, and said: "Messer, stay behind that the odour of corruption do not reach Thee."

Oh, woman full of charity, who thought more of Messer Jesus lest the evil odour should

reach Him, than of pressing forward to see her brother!

And Messer Jesus knelt down and said the words which are recounted in the Holy Gospel, and the two sisters knelt with Him very reverently, and so did all the other people who were akin to them, and all the multitude who had come thither to see what He would do.

Oh, what a thing it was to see the face of Messer Jesus when He prayed, and what devotion was His! And the good Jesus lifted His voice and called Lazarus; and immediately Lazarus stood upright upon his feet, but he could not move for he was bound. And the Lord commanded and said: "Loose him, that he may walk."

And the din of the people was very great, and it seemed as if no one could move for wonder of the miracle that they had seen.

And they unbound Lazarus, some of them taking off their garments wherewith to clothe him; and as soon as he was clothed, he ran and threw himself at the feet of Messer Jesus, and kissed them with such fervour, that all the people wept with devotion, and Lazarus cried, saying: "Thou art my God and my Lord, and

He who is, for all eternity." And the good Jesus raised him and embraced him, and gave him peace, which Lazarus received reverently.

And I think he turned to the Magdalen and embraced her; and likewise Martha and many others came to him and touched him. All the people cried aloud, blessing God and this great Prophet whom He had sent on earth, saying: "Truly this is the Son of God."

Then the good Jesus turned back again, and they came to Martha's dwelling-house, and Lazarus walked on one side of Him, and Mary on the other, and Martha went on before with great gladness to make preparation.

And Martha and Mary were very joyful because of the honour they had seen done to Messer Jesus, even more than because of the resurrection of their brother.

And I think they thought that all people would be humbled and well-nigh converted to Him through a miracle so manifest and so great.

And when Messer Jesus and His disciples had rested, whilst no others were admitted, then Lazarus would fain have stayed with Him; but He did not wish this, rather He bade him go out into the piazza, and that he

should come and go, and talk as he did before, that it might be seen that it was no feigned matter.

And Magdalen and Martha stayed beside Messer Jesus, and their happiness was such that none could tell it, and they were fully restored from the grief they had had before. And the sweet Magdalen sat at His feet, and gazed at Him eagerly, and pressed close up to Him, with such love was she inspired. And I think she felt another and an overwhelming joy, and that was to behold the glory of God so great in Jerusalem, and well-nigh in all Judea; for Messer Jesus had not hitherto wrought such great miracles, nor so manifest, and especially in that country-side; and from this still another happiness was born to them, for they wondered what thing now the Scribes and Pharisees could say against Him; and even if they should speak evil, they would surely be stoned, so that it seemed to them that He was safe for yet a long while; but they did not know how near their great sorrow was to them.

And in Jerusalem the news spread of how Lazarus had been raised from the dead, and those who had seen him were so many that it

could not be kept hidden; and immediately all the city was stirred, and went out to see this wonder; and so many were converted that none could tell the number; so that the elders and the priests were much dismayed, and they scarcely knew how that thing they wished for could be brought about. And they sent for certain worthy men and kindred of Lazarus, and made them recount this matter; and it was so manifest that they could not oppose it, wherefore their vexation grew greater, which was seen by their countenances. And it was told to Mary Magdalen how these men appeared troubled, and she was so much the more comforted.

And the Scribes and Pharisees consulted together how they might destroy and remove this man from off the earth. And one day—it seems it was the Friday before the Sunday of Olives—they assembled all together, that is, the counsellors, and said one: "Behold, all the world follows Him! What is to be done?"

And we must believe that the orators there were many; but even Caiaphas, who was high priest that year—and we must suppose he was a prophet—gave the evil counsel to his own

gain, and secretly they agreed that they would try every way and means to bring Messer Jesus to death. And they took forethought that it should not be done on the feast-day; and they thought to do it in such a way that none would raise a tumult. Then some of those who were present at this counsel, and who were secretly friends of Messer Jesus, immediately went to Bethany to tell Messer Jesus and the apostles how this counsel had been taken.

And the Magdalen and Martha had heard tell at once of this assembly, and they began to wonder what it might mean; and I think that they were not just then with Messer Jesus, but were in another part of the house. And one of these friends who had come thither said to them: "See, the chief priests have taken counsel, and agreed that Messer Jesus must die, and moreover they mean to kill Lazarus."

When the Magdalen heard these words I think her anguish was so great and so cruel that she fell swooning on the ground, and she was as frozen as snow, and her face seemed made of clay, and they thought she was dead. And Martha covered her face with her hands,

and Martilla did likewise, and they called for death, for they would fain not live long enough to see this suffering. Those of the household ran for Lazarus, who came to see how his sisters fared; and Lazarus came, who already knew of this matter, and he began to weep together with them, and they were consumed with grief, nor does it seem that they took care for the Magdalen who lay felled to the ground, and appeared to be dead, nay, rather they esteemed death their balm. They knew well that Messer Jesus must needs die for our redemption, but they wished it might not have come so soon, for it seemed to them as if they had been with Him scarcely a day, so hungry were they to see Him and be by His side.

And those of the household, seeing them in such a plight, ran to Messer Jesus, and, kneeling at His feet, said: "Messer, the Magdalen has fallen to the ground, and seems dead, and Martha and Lazarus seem also like to die for grief, and we do not know the reason."

And Messer Jesus, full of pity, came thither where they were, and immediately He called Mary, and she straightway arose at the voice of her Master, and at once threw herself at

His feet. And thou shouldst not marvel that she revived thus at the voice of Messer Jesus, for Lazarus a little time before had been dead four days, his soul in Limbo, his body swathed and laid in the sepulchre, and at the voice of Messer Jesus, almost in the twinkling of an eye, he rose upright upon his feet; even so did Mary Magdalen now.

I think Messer Jesus sat down with them, and sent out the others, and most sweetly did He console them. Death could not be hastened one half-hour, nor one instant more than He willed; and He said yet more tender words: "My children, did I not die in this way ye could not be with Me in eternity, nor in My glory; and Lazarus knows well with what longing the Holy Fathers in Limbo are awaiting My death and resurrection; and therefore comfort ye, My children, for we will soon win a glorious victory over our enemies; and when ye see Me most suffering, most humiliated and spurned, most scorned and most mocked, then shall I be the victor."

And then they understood that those who fight for Christ win the battle by dying.

And the Magdalen wept continually; and

we can imagine that though she faithfully believed what He said, nevertheless the grief of her heart could not be checked, and she had not the heart to escape from this sorrow, nor did she wish to, rather she would thankfully have died with Him; but it was needful that Messer Jesus as the true God, who knew and could do all things, should place His hand upon her, and give her greater strength. Now thus they were comforted as far as possible, and when they were with Him they bore all suffering more easily.

Now the people who were continually coming and going were more than one can tell, and Lazarus stayed outside to receive and satisfy every one, as he did before. Mary and Martha did not leave Messer Jesus save from discretion.

And I think when night came, and Messer Jesus had gone to rest, these sisters turned aside to be for a little while quite alone with their brother, for they had not yet had leisure to talk with him since he had been raised from the dead, so great had been the disturbance of the people. And being assembled they all three conversed together.

And I think that Martilla, who did not know all the secrets Messer Jesus had revealed to them, came to them, saying: "What shall you do? Will you be so base as to let this Master be taken, and will you let Him fall into the hands of His impious enemies, who will butcher Him as they do the beasts?" And she began to weep, and she said: "Rise up with all your friends, and all the people who follow ye, and as to those who would injure Him, despise them, hunt them, kill them! Do not permit this action, and, if need be, let us give our lives."

Then I think the Magdalen said: "Alas! He will not have it so! Did He desire it, we would quickly do what we could."

And all that night they spent in weeping and sorrow. And Lazarus told them the great things he had seen in Limbo, and had heard from those Holy Fathers—how they had questioned him concerning all the deeds and sayings of Messer Jesus, of His miracles, and of the contest He waged against the priests. "And they quoted the prophecies which foretold of Him, fitting them all to His words and deeds, and they told me that but few remain to be

fulfilled, now that He is about to die; and they were expecting this moment with such joy as I cannot tell; and they told me how He would rise again, and how they would go with Him into eternal life, and how they will know clearly all the truth of Messer Jesus."

And the Magdalen wept more sadly than words tell, saying: "Oh, wretched sinner that I am! Oh, must I indeed survive my Master? or how can I live if I do not see Him? I have not the heart to endure if He do not work a miracle in me. Alas! desire of my heart! too late have I known Thee, and such is the hunger that I have to be with Thee that I seem scarcely to have known Thee at all."

And her grief and weeping yet redoubled, and she beat her breast, and said: "Oh, wretched sinner, wilt thou live long enough to see thy sweet Master in the hands of hounds, and the gentle Lamb suffer in the teeth of wolves and lions? Now how can I bear to see them lay hands upon Him without reverence? I would that I could die a thousand, thousand times, if so many times one could rise again, rather than see that hour."

And she cried: "Now, O Lord! give me death before I see things so out of all reason, of all right."

Now she turned her thoughts towards death, and she said: "Alas! how can I bear to see the sweet Mother of my Master so sorrowfully bereft of such a Son, and to see His disciples scattered! Had I a thousand hearts in my body, I think they would all break at once."

And she grieved so bitterly that she thought to die; and Magdalen did not know what way to turn. On one side she wished to die that she might not see such sorrow, and on the other side she said to herself: "Ah, indeed! So thou wouldst die to escape pain? God forbid! Rather will I live and see all with mine eyes, that I may die a thousand deaths during all the time that I live."

And the Magdalen spent all the night with these bitter and sorrowful thoughts and tears, and none heeded her, for Martha and Lazarus did likewise, and they comforted each other with weeping and mourning, especially Lazarus, who had understood the truth of the matter so clearly.

Oh, my soul! why art thou not there with this blessed family to behold such faithful friends of Messer Jesus, and to pray them that they would ask grace for thee to do likewise? They had no desire of sleep, and no thought of repose in bed; they had no wish to be consoled when they perceived and considered that the infinite charity of God had given His Son to suffer such pains and such death for no fault or guilt of His, but for us sinners and for our sins. Wherefore the grief of the Magdalen redoubled, and she reflected, beating her breast, and saying: "Oh, my Lord, I am she for whom Thou bearest so many pains. For my wicked life deserves so many because it has been spent amongst curs, and for how many years have I not merited hell, maybe a thousand times every day? And Thou hast pardoned me through Thy goodness, I having done no penance, and now I shall see Thine innocence bear all the pains due to my sins to save me from hell. Alas, my Lord and sweet Master! to what has Thy solicitude for souls brought Thee?"

Oh, sweet Magdalen, while thinking these things thy love ever increased, and likewise thy

grief and anguish for thine innocent Master. And I think that they stayed thus all night; and early in the morning they came out to know if Messer Jesus had left His room that they might do all that was needful.

And when Messer Jesus came out, the most holy Magdalen threw herself at His feet, and prayed Him that it might please Him to send for His Mother so that she might come to keep the feast with them. And the Lord replied that it pleased Him well, since He would stay there yet a few days. And I think that the Magdalen had thought to herself: "If Madonna has heard tell of this evil counsel which has been taken, I can imagine the great sorrow that she will feel; so that I am fain she should be here, and take comfort from her blessed Son."

Thou hadst a good thought, fair Magdalen, but thou shouldst have known well that He had never left her in spirit, though in body He was far from her.

Now they sent for Madonna, and when she had arrived the festival was very great, and the Magdalen and the others forgot their sorrow, so that they no longer thought thereon

thus intently when they saw Messer Jesus and His Mother, and the great honour done to them by the crowd, who, I think, cried continually: "Blessed be He who has come in the name of God, for the salvation of others." And they cried with a loud voice: "Hail to the God of Israel and of our fathers, who has sent us the greatest Prophet that has ever been on earth!"

And whilst they shouted they recounted His great miracles, and many blessed Him. And the Magdalen found comfort in this also, that the death of Messer Jesus still delayed, though she was well aware that He could not escape death; but I think that that nail which had been thrust into her heart made her often shudder and heave bitter sighs. This, I think, was the Saturday before the Feast of Olives. And when the evening had come Messer Jesus called His disciples and told them secretly that to-morrow morning it was expedient that He should go into Jerusalem, for it was needful that certain prophecies should be fulfilled, and I think He bade them say nothing till the morrow.

Now imagine in what fear and affliction the

disciples spent that night. And the following morning Messer Jesus said to His mother and to the Magdalen and the others: "I wish to go to Jerusalem."

And the Magdalen shuddered at these words and immediately she threw herself on the ground, her face covered with tears, and she said: "Master, Thou knowest well that they have taken counsel to seize Thee and kill Thee."

His sweet Mother knew well what was, and what would be during that day; but still, perceiving that this thing was drawing near, the tears fell from her eyes in great number, and the apostles likewise grieved much.

But let us tell of the Magdalen who had thrown herself on the ground with prayers more tender than I could ever tell; and shedding many tears, she said: "Oh, dearest Father! Oh, sweetest Master! Why wilt Thou forsake us, and leave us orphans and friendless! I tell Thee, Master, we will all come to die with Thee."

And the Lord, full of pity and benignity, who knew her heart and that of the others, began to give sweet consolation, and maybe

He wept also for pity of them, and He said: "Be sure, I will return here this evening to sup with ye, and this day great honour shall be done to Me, and thus My Father wills it to be done. And I wish ye to be comforted, and to rejoice in My Father's glory."

And He turned to His Mother and said: "Sweet Mother, stay here. I do not wish thee to follow Me, for the multitude will be so great that thou couldst not keep near Me, and it would not be meet for thee to be amongst so many people."

And the Mother replied gently: "My blessed Son, go in peace; I commend Thee to Thy Father, and I pray Thee that Thou wilt not fail us. Come back this evening, as Thou hast said."

And Messer Jesus bowed humbly before His Mother, and took leave of her and of the others.

So the good Jesus, leaving them all consoled, started with His disciples and went towards Jerusalem. And the anxious Magdalen instantly bade certain of the household follow Him together with Lazarus, and one she told to return as Jesus entered Jerusalem, so that he should be able to recount all that had

happened till then; and another she ordered that when He entered the temple of God to take heed of what aspect the elders of the temple presented, and instantly to turn back to tell them everything.

Oh, most prudent Magdalen! how wise thou wast! how thoughtful of all that which it was right to do; nor can one say or imagine so much, that thou didst not exceed it. And I think this of thee, that there was never a realm in this world that thou wast not capable of ruling, both in judgment and discretion; and these, I say, were thine by nature, and, moreover, I am certain that the grace of God had more than redoubled them since thou wast converted. And although formerly thou didst mar thyself by evil inclinations, the good Lord restored thee through His great mercy, and made of thee an example to women in the Church, as He did of Paul to men; and I think if thou hadst had disciples, and they had written down thy deeds and all thy sayings, and the gentle nature of thy person, and thy sweet talk of Christ and His doctrine, they would have filled more volumes of books than one could count.

Now, let us return to our subject.

I think that all that morning until tierce the Magdalen was alert and watchful for the return of any one to tell her news of her Master. Madonna was alone in her room in prayer, beseeching God for her Son, that He might escape the malice and the ferocity of wicked men. Martha and Martilla were making ready and providing for a great supper, since Messer Jesus had said He would return thither to sup.

I think at this hour, that is, about tierce, the first messenger she had sent returned in great joy with a branch of olive in his hand, and he came to the Magdalen; and immediately she saw him she thought he was bringing good news. And the messenger began to tell of the events of the Sunday of Olives as it is told in the Gospel, how the populace of Jerusalem went out to meet Him with loud shouts of praise, escorting Him into the city, and taking off their garments and casting them on the ground, and also branches of olive. "And, behold, here is the sign; this branch of olive which I have brought is one of those they gathered for honour of Jesus, and they

cried with loud voices: 'Blessed be He who comes in the name of God! Hosanna in excelsis!'"

And I think the Magdalen, full of joy, took this branch of olive and carried it to Madonna, and told her the tidings with great gladness; and His Mother rendered sweet thanks to God. Martha and all the household gathered round with great delight to hear this news.

And I think that about noon the other messenger returned, and told how he had left Him in the temple, and of all the great things He had done therein, and of the great power He had revealed when He chased the merchants from the temple, and how none had resisted Him.

And the Magdalen asked if the priests and Scribes had approached Him; and the messenger replied that they had not let themselves be seen, save at certain very high windows, whence they had looked to see why the tumult was so great. And the loving Magdalen rejoiced much because of this, saying: "Perhaps it will not come about as they expect;" whence she took courage a little. Martha and Martilla went about the house,

continually kneeling and crying to God to take away the strength of His enemies, and to give victory to His blessed Son.

And the good Jesus stayed there until the hour of vespers, preaching the kingdom of heaven, and showing forth the malice and hypocrisy of the elders of the temple more than ever before; and yet that day none was found in all the city who invited Him to eat and drink. And this, they say, was because of the fear they had of the elders of the temple, who went about openly threatening; and all the people marvelled that they had not taken Him that day, and, indeed, they would have done so had they been able.

And behold Messer Jesus came to Bethany that evening, and a great supper was there prepared. And all things were ready, and these blessed women, seeing that a great multitude had followed Him, would not permit any to enter save Jesus and His disciples. His Mother and the Magdalen and the others received Him with joy when they saw that He had escaped out of the claws of the lions; and I think that Messer Jesus, in order to do them pleasure, turned to the Magdalen and Martha



Brogi Photo.

THE MAGDALEN

After the painting by Guercino at Naples

with a glad and friendly countenance, and said: "I would fain eat, for to-day we have neither eaten nor drunk."

Now think with what delight these sisters received these words of intimacy; and immediately they replied: "Sweetest Master, all is ready."

And at once the water was prepared that Messer Jesus and His Mother and the disciples might wash their hands; and this done, they placed themselves at the table. The Magdalen and Martha served as usual with great gladness, and the bread and the other things He left they reserved for themselves with great devotion, and the evening was spent in much joy and gladness.

Oh, blessed House! wherein were harboured such a Mother and such a Son, and so many other good people! How good were and are all those who love Messer Jesus!

And Jesus said to this blessed family: "I desire that to-morrow ye should prepare a great supper, for many of our friends will come hither from Jerusalem, to whom I would give complete consolation."

And the Magdalen threw herself on the

ground, saying: "My Master, I give Thee thanks for these words, for even I myself, I wished that Thou wouldst do this; be Thou blessed in eternity."

And then that evening, the sisters and their brother being together, they arranged a great supper, and that all things should be doubled; and so they bade their stewards and all the household that each one should quietly and devotedly prepare everything necessary, and so abundantly that the poor also might partake of this supper for love of Messer Jesus.

And I think the blessed Magdalen, whose thoughts ever turned to Messer Jesus, wondering how she might do Him pleasure and honour, bought ointment, the most precious that could be bought, to pour out over her sweet Master at this great supper, thinking, thereby, to do Him honour and pleasure.

According to the Gospel of Saint John this supper took place the Saturday before the Sunday of Olives, for it says, "Six days before the Pasch," but nevertheless the Church puts it on Holy Monday, the day after the Feast of Olives. But I do not trouble myself about this in my meditation; it delights me to tell of the

Magdalen, and of what she did at this time according to my fancy. The truth remains stable in its place, and by the grace of God, I hold no opinion, nor believe any other than what is taught by the holy mother Church; and those thoughts of mine that are not affirmed by the Church, I do not affirm at all. But it rejoices and delights me to be imagining such things to the profit of this our mother the Church, and it does not seem to me a loss of time when I think and discourse thereof; and what is still better is this, that whilst I think of her, I must perforce think of Messer Jesus and of His Mother. Rather through Him I think of her, for He made her so good and so great in His eyes and in His love.

Now let us return to the supper, which they say was held in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper (and this house the Gospel places in Bethany), where they say that Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table, and eat at the side of Messer Jesus, and Martha ministered, although it seems to me a marvel that Martha should serve in the house of another; and I think that this was not the supper of the *Passio*. But let that be as it may, I think of the Mag-

dalen and of this blessed family in this way. And near to Jerusalem there were many great and noble men, who desired to come and see if this great miracle was true; we can imagine that though they had seen him go about and talk, yet perhaps they had not seen him eat. And therefore I think that Messer Jesus wished that he should sit at the principal table so that all the people might see him eat.

Now, behold, while they were seated at the table the Magdalen came with her treasure of ointment, and Gospel says there was a pound thereof, and it says that she anointed His feet; and the *Passio* says that she poured it over His head. I think that perhaps it was one and the other, for the murmuring of the Jews is recorded also in this same Gospel; when the Magdalen poured out the ointment, the odour thereof was so great that it filled all the house. I think every one who was there judged it the most precious ointment that was ever made in this world, and certainly it ought well to be so, since it was used for so great a One. And behold, what a thing it is to have an evil heart! Wretched Judas, whose soul was corrupt through avarice, turned murmuring

towards his companions, and he gave his words a semblance of piety, that they might not appear evil. And to-day they do likewise concerning such things as that which the Magdalen did, and inwardly and outwardly they give to their deeds that aspect which seems fair.

Now let us tell of the good soul of the Magdalen, who thought otherwise. For all the precious stones that are under the skies, or any other thing of price that is in this world, could she have had them, she would have desired them all to use for the person of her sweet Master, and all she could imagine or do seemed to her nothing compared with what was due to Him; and indeed she spoke truly. And then the blessed Master answered and defended Mary's action against the murmurs of the people, and commended her much, saying: "She has done well, for the poor ye will always have with ye, but ye will not always have Me."

To whom doest Thou speak this word, Messer Jesus? I think Thou sayest it to the hypocrites, who have ever their eye upon the poor, and give them alms, not for Thee, Master, but

in order to be praised by the world, so that they have not Thee ever with them, though they have the poor.

But let us return to think of what happiness the Magdalen felt when she saw that this action pleased her Master, and that He was satisfied with it, and how glad was Martha and all those others who loved Messer Jesus. And the murmuring of Judas was mistrusted to his shame, and I think his heart was wrathful because of these words and of this shame, and soon afterwards he showed it clearly.

Now the Magdalen, to whom had been given this great joy, together with it had received much bitterness, for Messer Jesus said: "Keep of this ointment for the day of My burial."

When she thought afterwards of these words, they renewed in her heart the nail of sorrow.

At this supper Messer Jesus spoke words of eternal life, and the Magdalen stayed as near to Him as she could, retaining them in her heart and memory.

And the devotion with which those other people listened to the words of Messer Jesus, and gazed upon Lazarus, who was eating and

drinking and conversing, and doing as other men do, showed clearly that they had eternal life.

And now the supper was done, and all the people praised and blessed God who had sent so great a Prophet into the world.

And Messer Jesus stayed with His disciples and this holy household; and He showed them such friendliness and such love as He had never done before. And indeed it was needful that He should fortify them, for in a few days thence they would have immeasurable grief to bear.

Now I think He did not wish that His Mother should sup with Him with so many people. And Mary and Martha desired that Madonna and her companions, who I think were her sisters, and other good and pious women, should have supper; so the Magdalen bade prepare in some room where she was, both very splendidly and very reverently. But Madonna, being invited to place herself at the table, said, as a most humble Mother, that she would not, for she wished to wait for those who were serving her Son, that is Mary and Martha.

Oh, dearest Mother, thou wast not uplifted because thou wast the Mother of such a Son, or because thou didst see Him to-day raised to such eminence and worldly glory! Rather the greater thy prosperity, the more profound was thy humility.

And I think when the people had gone Martha and Mary went at once to sup with Madonna, and I think that Madonna desired that her Son should be present at this supper to give consolation to those who were with her. And He who knew and knows all desires did thus; and He came with some of His disciples thither where they were supping and sat down by the side of His Mother, intimately and reverently. And I think He sliced the bread for her and for the guests to eat, and He spoke glad and consoling words to them.

Now think of what the Magdalen felt, she who was nearer to the Son and to His Mother than any other; with what eagerness she took the bread that these hands had cut and touched.

And I think that Messer Jesus wished to show favour to Martha, for He loved her much, and He said: "Martha, Martha, how is it with all the poor and sick? How have

they fared to-day whilst thou hast been so busy?"

And Martha replied: "Master, it is well with them, through Thy goodness, for they await Thy coming with such gladness as none can tell; and so many have come hither that our house and all the others are full, and scarcely have we been able to do for them."

And the Lord said: "Be comforted, Martha, to-morrow we will think of them, and heal them body and soul, and send them home made glad."

And Martha replied: "The house will be filled again with others."

And Jesus said: "And thou desirest this." (And thus He did, and the following day He healed them, and immediately the house was filled with others.)

And Martha replied: "Rather it is Thou who dost desire it, and who makest me desire likewise, for from Thee comes all good and mercy."

And His Mother and all the others were listening to these sweet words. And I think that Messer Jesus said: "Behold, Martha, because thou art the friend of the poor for love of Me, when I go elsewhere I leave thee

power and grace so that thou mayest heal the poor and sick in body and soul according to thy wish, and when thou seest that there is aught to be done."

And Martha replied with great reverence, and said: "Thanks be to Thee and to Thy charity, for I hold this gift as the most precious possible."

And I think, seeing how Messer Jesus stayed with them so intimately, and answered their every thought, the Magdalen said: "Lord, Thou speakest only to Martha! Oh, what dost Thou leave to me?"

And I think that Jesus replied willingly, saying: "I leave to thee that thou do penance, and through this thou shalt be loved of all sinners to the world's end."

And the Magdalen instantly threw herself at His feet, and said: "Sweetest Master, I take these words to heart; I give Thee praise and thanks for this bequest with all my heart and mind, inasmuch as I can, for I longed for this grace."

And they sat down to eat.

And His Mother, seeing these signs of holiness, rejoiced in her heart, and wishing to invite

her Son to tell all briefly, she said with a glad countenance: "My Son, oh, what dost Thou leave to me?"

And I think that her Son answered, and He turned towards her, His face full of gladness and reverence, and He said: "My Mother, all things that are mine are thine, for there is no barrier between us."

And indeed He spake truly, for as she had no sin, so there was no barrier, because sin is that which separates the soul from God. And His Mother gave thanks with great reverence, and blessed His goodness.

And when they had supped, conversing thus intimately, and had been together for a little while, they desired to go to rest, and each one of them craved His permission and His blessing, which He gave lovingly; and He went back to that room where He was wont to spend the night with His disciples.

And I think while Messer Jesus was with these women a few of the disciples were with Judas, and I think that some of them chid him gently because he had stirred this murmuring amongst the people concerning the ointment; and he was angry because of the shame he had

suffered. And I think he would not own his fault, but, like a brazen-faced fool, excused himself, and said: "Ah, well, at least what I said was true."

And they replied: "Not so, brother. Many things are true, and yet should not be spoken."

But for all they could say, that thief would not acknowledge his sin; rather, I think, he shook his head, and said in his heart: "I will make it cost Him dear."

And even thus he did. And we must suppose that it was by divine permission, in order to work the benefit of souls, though to him it brought damnation; and he, who would not do good, thus wrought to the benefit of others, and to his own destruction. And I think that in that night he resolved in his cursed heart to go secretly to the chief priests, and to make a compact with them to betray Messer Jesus. And so he did. And it seems, they say, that it was on Holy Wednesday he received his price —that is, thirty pence, the amount which he had calculated to steal by means of the ointment, had it been sold. Accursed be avarice! O Judas! why didst thou not ask of the Magdalen, who would have given thee as

much as thou couldst desire, before thou didst work this treachery? So much wouldst thou have received, that thou wouldst not have been able to lift it from the ground; but the malignant soul knows neither how to choose the right way, nor to take counsel. O Magdalen! hadst thou known the thoughts of this shameless thief this night, thou couldst not have eaten a morsel of bread, had Messer Jesus permitted thee to go without!

Now let us return to the Magdalen.

When she found herself alone that night in prayer she recalled the word of Messer Jesus, when He said, "Keep some of this ointment for the day of My burial." Then all her consolation and happiness left her, and she broke into weeping, so cruel and so violent that one cannot tell it; and she said to herself: "Ah, wretched sinner that I am! shall I live long enough to see Thee laid in the tomb, and until that moment when I must needs anoint Thee? Oh, Life of my soul! how I have loved Thee, and do love Thee! Oh, if I see them lay rough hands upon Thee, sure my sorrowing heart will break! Oh, my Hope and my Comfort, Thou knowest well that I could not bear to see Thee

die, even were it a natural death, and not at the hands of these dogs of Jews; and this I do not say because my own death would grieve me, nor because of the pains I might suffer, but I lament Thy death, and the pains I expect to see Thee bear. And so much this grieves me, that were it possible to take from Thee this death and this passion, and to take it upon myself, willingly would I bear it, and a hundred times more; and Thou, my Lord, shouldst rest and escape all pain and death! And Thou sayest to me: 'Keep this ointment for the day of My burial.' Alas! my Lord, with what feet shall I come to Thee, with what hands shall I anoint Thee, or how shall I bear to see Thee with mine eyes lying dead in the tomb? Or how can I bear to see Thy mother thus afflicted? I tell Thee, Lord, I have not strength for this, and Thou knowest it."

And she beat her breast and wept so bitterly, that it seemed as if her heart would break. And I think that many die for less pain than this. And again she said: "Thou biddest me prepare this ointment for Thy burial! Ah, who could bear to go thither, Lord, to see this grievous sight—to see Thee laid in the tomb?"

And she said: "I beseech Thee, Lord, with all my heart, that Thou wilt make me worthy to bear all the pains and all the insults that Thou must bear, and all those stripes which can be borne for each sinner, let me suffer them all before Thine eyes, before I see Thee die and lie dead in the sepulchre; for Thou art innocent and without sin, and they could not torture me so much but more would be due to me; and, therefore, I pray Thee, O Lord, that Thou wilt take vengeance on this wretched sinner, for did I suffer all the pains of hell, they would be nothing compared with what I deserve. And Thou, Messer, most innocent and most just, wilt Thou suffer all that I should bear? For certain, Messer, it is for Thy pain that I weep, and not for mine own."

And while the Magdalen uttered these bitter and grievous lamentations, I think that Messer Jesus, who hears and knows all things, saw the sorrow of her heart, and wept for pity of her.

To speak of her as sleepy at such a moment would be to talk foolishly, but I think that Messer Jesus made her slumber, she herself

not knowing how, rather marvelling thereat afterwards and even regretful.

As soon as morning came, and she saw Messer Jesus and His Mother, she was comforted and made glad.

Now I think that those men of gentle birth who had been at that supper returned to Jerusalem, and they told this news openly, how they had seen Lazarus eating and drinking at table with them, and how all the people who were on their way to the feast at Jerusalem turned aside thither to see Lazarus thus brought back to life. And these things being repeated to the chief priests, I think they sent for certain good men, and subtly examined them concerning these things that they had seen and heard; and they told all things without fear, especially how the multitude cried from time to time: "Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini! Hosanna in excelsis!"

And at these words the priests broke down and were like to die, and they knew not what to do. And those men departed, and the chief priests stayed and took counsel to kill Lazarus, because through his coming and his words all men believed in Messer Jesus, and they were

ever seeking the way this might be achieved; and during this counsel I think the evil Judas came and offered to deliver Jesus into their hands. Then these men were very glad, and they struck the bargain without quarrel, agreeing to give him what he asked, that is, thirty pence, and that he should fetch them at his pleasure. Blind wast thou, Judas, in many ways! If thou wast so hungry for money, why didst thou not ask much more? I think they would have given thee a limitless sum, and that merchandise which thou wast selling certainly could not be bought for more than it was worth.

Now I think Messer Jesus stayed in this place with these blessed people until Thursday morning, showing them such friendliness and such love as none can tell, and it seemed to them that they were in Paradise, so abundantly did He give them of His grace; but beyond the high hill lies the deep valley.

The Magdalen was ever nigh to Him, serving Him and listening to Him, and blessing Him in thought and word, and ever the love in her soul grew infinitely greater.

And, behold, Wednesday evening came, and

in the book of the Life of Christ it is related how that Wednesday evening Christ supped with His Mother, and with the Magdalen and Martha and Lazarus, and with His disciples. And I think He would permit no other to come, because of the words He wished then to speak; and they say that Messer Jesus showed more tenderness and love to His Mother than ever before, and likewise to the Magdalen and to the others. And also they say that after the supper He sat down by His Mother and spoke to her words of eternal life; and finally He said that He desired to keep the Passover with His disciples.

But the Magdalen was so dismayed when she heard these words that her face became like ashes, and her grief so acted on her that she could not speak, and, moreover, the apostles all were terrified, and I think that they said: "Master, why wouldst Thou go to Jerusalem? Thou knowest well that our elders have agreed to kill Thee, and these tidings have reached even us, for every day their envy increases. We beseech Thee ardently that Thou wilt let their fury, which just now is so flaming, die away;

have pity on us, for without Thee we can do nothing."

And they began to weep bitterly, and at these words the Magdalen lavished her tears, and her eyes seemed two fountains, and she touched His Mother softly, and asked her also to pray Him not to go to Jerusalem, but to keep the Passover there with them all. And His Mother said tenderly to her Son: "My Son, let us keep the Passover here, if Thou wilt, with these, who, Thou seest, love Thee so."

And the Lord answered and said: "Dearest Mother, dost thou not know that it is meet that I should be doing those things which my Father wills, and for which He has sent me."

And His Mother answered: "So be it."

And the knife entered anew into her soul, as Simeon had foretold. And I think that the Magdalen and the others did not understand that He spoke of His death, but thought that He would do some great deed during this Passover, so that they dared not say more.

I think that the Magdalen spent that night in such anguish and such grief as are beyond words, and she said to herself, "As for me,

I fear this may prove a great calamity." And she wept all the night, without rest and without sleep, and the good Jesus made her remember that resolve of the high priests, that they would not take Him on the feast-day, because He was held very great by the populace, so that she took comfort a little, and she thought that maybe they would not do it during that Passover; whence she grew calmer in her heart, and she stayed long in prayer, sweetly beseeching God that He would take away their power, so that they could work no harm to her Master, and this she prayed with all her heart.

And the morning having come when Messer Jesus would go to Jerusalem, the Magdalen prayed Madonna to ask if He desired them to go with Him to Jerusalem, and the Lord said: "Yes, but come after we have gone." I think He did not wish them to go at the same time as Himself, because He had to talk with His disciples upon matters of great pain.

And the women got ready, and went to Jerusalem to their houses, whither they had been accustomed to stay at other times.

I think that Martha stayed to look after the poor and sick, who had come thither, and were ever coming to be healed by Messer Jesus, thinking He was there.

And the Magdalen and the others having arrived, began to see about the things they thought needful, thinking that perhaps He might wish to eat there, but not knowing it for certain.

And Messer Jesus, resting in the same place, said to His disciples: "I have desired to eat this Passover with you."

And the apostles immediately replied: "Master, where wilt Thou that we should make ready?"

And the good Master told Peter and John to go and prepare, and He told them in what place, and how to roast the lamb, and all other things necessary.

I think Peter and John went quickly into the city and procured a fine and fair lamb, and I think they took it to the house of the Magdalen, and gave it to those of the household that they should roast it.

And when the Magdalen saw them she was very glad, and she asked where she should

prepare; and they answered, that on Sion, in such and such a house, this supper was to be made ready, as the Master had bidden them. And they said to her: "Prepare the tables and the cloths and all things else needful."

And I think one of them bade her provide viands and fish as it seemed right to her. And she made all ready liberally, and saw that everything necessary was prepared. And she went to His Mother, and repeated these things, as Peter and John had told. And the Magdalen seemed to be comforted, and she said: "Madonna, shall we not go to this supper?" And she answered gently: "My daughter, yes, if thou dost desire it."

I think that that morning when Messer Jesus left Bethany He called Martha and recommended the sick and poor to her care, as He recommended His flocks to Peter; and He said: "I would not have thee depart hence, unless I send for thee."

And Martha accepted this charge with reverence and devotion beyond words, kneeling and giving Him thanks, saying: "I am ready to do Thy will in all things."

And He blessed her with tenderness.

And I think that Thou didst leave Lazarus with her, thus showing Thy desire that he might escape the rage of those who had thought to kill him. And we must believe that Martha would fain have seen and heard Messer Jesus, and have been near Him, above all things; but when she knew His will, she was more glad to obey than to follow her own desires. And so I think Lazarus also stayed behind, for they both loved with the direct love of charity.

I think that when Messer Jesus entered Jerusalem He went first to His Mother and the Magdalen to rest a little with them.

And I think His Mother desired to speak with Him in secret, and she said thus: "My sweet Son, I know that Thou hast ordained this supper for the Sacrament of Thy Body and Blood, which Thou wilt leave to Thy Church, as a comfort and a consolation for all faithful Christians; and I know that Thou dost wish to give communion to Thy disciples. My Son, I would fain receive this Sacrament first from Thy hands, ere I receive it from any other person, if so Thou wilt?"

And this she said with gentle tears.

And Messer Jesus answered tenderly: "Thou dost ask a just thing, and I wish it to be so."

Then Madonna asked this grace also for the Magdalen and for her sisters who were with her, and the Lord granted it gladly; but He bade them not come in until He sent for them, for I think that the Lord would not have them see all those things that must then be done, for He would fain not hasten His Magdalen's sorrow. His Mother knew all.

And these words being said, Messer Jesus conversed with them intimately, and then He went away to the supper-room; and the Magdalen instantly cried: "O Madonna, hast thou permission for us to go to the supper?"

And Madonna said: "Yes, but He said that He would send for us when He wished us to come."

And the Magdalen was glad and consoled.

The supper was great and splendid, and well served with great gladness, but therewith great grief and fear were mingled, because of the words that Messer Jesus uttered during this supper, as it is related in the *Passio;* and there were there to serve some of those seventy-two

disciples, and the Magdalen sent also of those who were in the house, who helped to carry the things wanted. And the Magdalen asked them eagerly if they had seen the Master, and if they had ministered to all His needs, and they answered: "Those who served took the things we carried, and they would not let us enter."

The Magdalen was glad because of this, for she thought that they acted thus in order to keep guard over Messer Jesus.

And when Messer Jesus had completed the washing of feet, and had said all those words He wished, and was about to ordain the Sacrament, He sent for His Mother and the others, bidding them come as secretly as they could.

Now it is not to be read in the Gospel that Madonna, or any other women, were at this supper; but it delights me to think it was thus, especially because of this Blessed Sacrament. And why should it not be so, and why not as meet or more for her and the Magdalen as for the disciples? Was she not the apostle and guardian of the Gospel? And weighing the truth of Messer Jesus, as it is discerned by eye and ear, though I do not therefore assert

it, yet I say that maybe they were present, and it delights me much to believe that it was so. Oh, how many good things did they do and say, which are not recorded.

Now the Magdalen and the two sisters of Madonna came thither, and the Lord received them with a joyful countenance; and the disciples were all amazed at the things heard and done during this supper.

Messer Jesus sat by His Mother and the other women close to her; and when the moment came to institute the Sacrament, He took bread in His most holy hands, and lifted His eyes to heaven, remaining quite still, and He spoke with His Father in Heaven.

When the Magdalen and the others saw this they threw themselves on their knees with such reverence as no words could tell, and they gazed on His face, which was bright and luminous so that it seemed a sun, and He was rapt more than they had ever seen Him.

Oh, how these people were moved with devotion! And when Messer Jesus turned, I think He broke the bread, and first gave thereof to His Mother, and then to all the rest, as it pleased Him. And I think that



Alinari Photo.

THE SAVIOUR APPEARING TO THE MAGDALEN

After the painting by Lorenzo di Credi at Florence

when the Magdalen had tasted the bread of angels, she was wrapt in such sweetness and devotion as none could estimate, and she was well-nigh beside herself, so much so that she seemed to be in Paradise.

Afterwards Messer Jesus gave them of the Chalice of His most Holy Blood. Then when it came to the Magdalen she came to herself as if from a trance, and she took the Chalice, and experienced great sweetness.

And when the Communion was complete, Messer Jesus began to preach, and He said words most beautiful, most perfect, and of greater virtue than any He had ever spoken, saying: "Come unto Me, and I will come unto you," and all those other sayings of love and charity, as the sermon recounts.

They listened to Him with such contentment as words cannot tell, and ever their love redoubled. And I think that each one amongst them shed tears of a devotion beyond speech. And while uttering these words, behold, already night fell. And Messer Jesus arose, and went with His disciples on to Mount Olivet, and the women returned to the house where they were before. And first, Our Lady

went away into a room to pray ; the Magdalen returned reassured, and seeing that the Master had met with no hindrance, and had left the city safe and sound, she thought that this matter might even yet linger ; for she knew well that Messer Jesus had to die for human nature, and that it was best so. But it seemed to her so short a time that she had been with Him, that she longed for His death to be delayed ; and she did not consider this fact, that the more she stayed with Him, the more her love was kindled and redoubled a thousand times.

The women had not supped, and none thought of food, so well were they nourished with celestial bread. But those of the household had prepared the supper, and they said to the Magdalen : "Will ye not sup this evening ?"

And the Magdalen rose forthwith and went for Our Lady, and they sat down to supper, but they could eat nothing, so deeply were they moved with devotion.

Alas ! the great anguish of Our Lady ! for I think that that night she was expecting the blow that should be dealt against her Son, and she suffered such pain and fear that it seemed as if her heart were trembling in her breast ;

nevertheless she ruled herself with such fortitude, that she revealed nothing to these others, rather she spoke to them with friendliness, inviting them to eat, and she even forced herself to eat likewise.

And when they had supped, they stayed together for a little to talk of all they had seen with great devotion, and then each one of them went away to her own room, where she was to pass the night.

And when Our Lady was alone in prayer, I think she began to ponder, as one who understood them completely, upon the prophecies that had been made concerning her Son. And she perceived that they had been fulfilled up till this moment; and discerning these, she began to think upon those prophecies which foretold all that had yet to be done to Messer Jesus, as if she had already seen them all.

And when she began to think of those prophecies which were to be fulfilled that same night—that is, how He was to be taken and bound, and led away, and all those other things that were done to Him in that night—so overwhelming were her sorrow and her tears that

she fell swooning to the ground, and her tears flowed in a fountain at her feet. And when she had recovered a little she rose to her knees, and lifting her mind to heaven, she said: "Celestial Father, I know that Thou wilt accomplish the prophecies which Thou hast spoken by Thy holy prophets, and I know Thou hast ordained that Thy Son should die by this so strange a death; I ask only this grace, that Thou wilt lessen to Him the pains that He must needs suffer, and visit them upon me, so that I die with Him. Oh, merciful Father, how can I bear to see them inflict such torment on my Son? how can I bear to see Him die so infamous a death? Holy Father, Thou art pitiful to the beasts; now what has made Thee ruthless to Thy Son? Alas! but human nature costs Him dear, merciful Father! And if Thou must needs be pitiless to Thy Son, and wilt not diminish His sufferings, at least grant this grace to me, Thy handmaid, that I may bear His pains and die with Him. Ah, let me not live after He is dead!"

Alas! I think that she was answered thus: "Thou shalt bear His pains in thy heart and

soul, but it is not My will that thou shouldst die."

And Our Lady, with tears more than I can tell, humbled herself, and said: "Fiat voluntas tua." And in these words she resembled her Son, who perhaps in that very hour was speaking even thus to His Father: "Fiat voluntas tua," together with those other words recounted in the *Passio*.

Alas! torment it is to think that the Magdalen and these others were thinking only of the great devotion they had felt concerning this great new thing, the Holy Sacrament. Nor did the Magdalen know that the Mother of God, whom she loved so, was dying of sorrow, while there was none to comfort her, none who said aught to her, rather it seemed that God and His angels had become ruthless towards the Mother and her Son. Alas, Magdalen! that thou didst not know, for thou wouldst have borne her company, passing through the agony of grief together with her, and, mayhap, it would have been a consolation to her to have a companion in such sorrow.

Certainly I think that that Mother could find no balm save only in thinking of how it

was with her Son, and what He might then be doing; if He were weeping, or praying, or suffering; if He were in fear, or engaged in combat; and her heart trembled like a reed, for she expected ever to hear those doleful words, "Thy son is taken," which, indeed, she could not endure to think of.

And the good Jesus then was suffering till His sweat was of blood, and His Mother would willingly have cut open her hands if she had thought it would have been pleasing to God, or that her Son might thereby have had some alleviation.

Oh, sweet Mother! I think thou didst indeed bear thy Son's sufferings in thy heart and soul with such pain that, I think, according to nature, thou couldst not have lived, but the gift of fortitude was so great in thee that thou didst master all thy dolour.

Alas, Magdalen! how I regret that thou wast not quite alone with her then! But I think thou wast to be with her many and many a time during thy life.

And whilst she was suffering this anguish midnight passed, and it was already nearly morning when some one knocked at the outer

door. And as soon as Madonna heard it, her sorrow was renewed, and she said: "That will be the messenger who has come to tell me ill tidings of my Son."

And the Magdalen, who was not sleeping, sent to know who it was, and she was told it was John the Evangelist. She marvelled much, and was seized with fear, and bade them open to him instantly. And Madonna came out of her room and asked who it was, and they told her it was John. And she knew at once what had happened. And John came up the stairs, and arriving at the summit, he found Madonna; and I think that he did not greet her as usual, and his sobs and weeping were so great that he could not speak.

The mother said immediately: "Is my Son taken?" And he said: "Yes."

And when the Magdalen heard this, the pang of dismay in her heart was so great that I think she uttered as it were a death-rattle, clenched her fists, and fell swooning on the ground. Madonna had greater fortitude than she had, and all the night these thoughts had been with her; but nevertheless when she heard what had been done her suffering was so cruel that

she could scarcely sustain life in her body. And St. John gave vent to his grief, for in the hall of the chief priest he could not give way, or they would have chased him thence, or done worse to him. And he desired to see the end, so he stayed there long enough to see the intentions of those cursed ones, who spat in His face, and cried out that He was guilty and worthy of death. And after that I think they sent Messer Jesus into a room with certain guards in whom they placed faith, and they locked Him in, nor would they let any enter there.

Oh, sweet John! how willingly wouldst thou have stayed with Him through this night, but thou wast not bold enough to say so, and maybe it would have availed nothing! Oh, what grief was thine when thou didst see Him locked in, in the hands of rapacious wolves who longed to wreak vengeance on Him. It was a marvel that thou didst not fall dead at the supper when thou didst hear from Himself how He would be betrayed.

Now how couldst thou see Him with thine own eyes so shamefully treated by those lions and dogs, who were greedy for His death, and

yet live, so that thou must needs return without thy sweet Master and Brother, with whom thou wast brought up and intimate from childhood?

I think that to see Him thus imprisoned, and none of you able to be with Him, was such great anguish that death would not have been greater. Already Peter had departed, grievously dismissed, and now thou didst come away transpierced with sorrow, and I think as soon as thou wast outside the door, instantly it was locked behind thee.

And he said to himself dolorously: "Now where wilt thou go, O John? Whither turn without thy sweet Master? Now who can give thee comfort? Wilt thou return to His Mother, who mayhap will die of grief? Canst thou receive comfort from the Magdalen? Certain I am that she cannot bear this if God does not miraculously support her. Or can thy brother apostles give thee consolation? Indeed, I know not how it may be with any of them. Oh, wretched that I am! what shall I do? Now indeed are the sheep without a shepherd, as He foretold to us yester eve!"

And I think he wandered round that cursed

palace like a man astray, and round about there where he thought might be the room in which the good Jesus was captured; here he stayed and listened to see if he might hear aught of the torments those hounds were inflicting upon Messer Jesus, and if he might hear His sweet voice, and he leant close against the wall, saying: "Sweet Master, would I could fall dead here, ere I see them torture Thee."

For a while he stayed there, but he neither saw nor heard aught, and he came away. And as it was recounted above, when he arrived there where was the Mother, he gave vent to his weeping, and he lamented without restraint. Then at this stir the two sisters of Madonna came thither, and, perceiving what had happened, they began so great a wailing and mourning as no soul could perceive.

And I think that at this noise all the household arose, and I think that amongst them were certain holy and faithful women who had lately left their homes and had come thither to lodge in order to see and hear Messer Jesus and His Mother more often. All these approached, and when they heard these tidings they gave way to

unmeasured weeping, nor could they comfort one another, for each one mourned for the good Jesus, and in such way that nothing else mattered to them. And I think that the Magdalen lay swooning near to Madonna, and none gave heed to see if she were dead or living.

I think that Our Lady, ever full of wisdom, turned and touched her, and taking her by the hand, said: "Rise up, my daughter, for more is left to us to do than weeping, and do not desire death, though death would be to us a peace and a great rest; but we must suffer with my Son, though we cannot thereby help Him, nor diminish His pain one instant."

Then I think as she said these words, so great was the stress of grief in her heart, that they thought she would have died.

The Magdalen arose as one bewildered, and when she saw this great weeping and grief, she tore her hair, and lifting her voice she cried out in great sorrow, saying: "My most sweet Master, ah, how has the sorrowful Magdalen been beguiled! I who this night have rested and rejoiced, because of those things I saw Thee do last night. And now I discover that

Thou hast been the while in the clutches of rapacious wolves. Oh, wretched is my life! Why did I not know it that I might have wept and mourned with Thee all night? But I am not worthy! Oh, my sweet Master! shall I ever see Thee again? I beseech Thee grant me the grace to accompany Thee in Thy sufferings!" And she looked around her, and she asked: "Where are Peter and the other disciples?"

Then John made answer: "Alas! the Shepherd is struck down, and all the sheep are scattered. I know not where any of them may be."

Ah, me! what sorrowful tidings were these for Our Lady and the Magdalen when they heard these words! Oh! how they kept thinking in their hearts that Messer Jesus was left alone in the hands of those who were hungering to kill Him shamefully.

I think that the Magdalen said: "Now what shall we do, dearest Mother? Shall we go to the Temple to see if we may hear or see aught concerning Him?"

And I think Our Lady replied tenderly: "My most dear daughter, we shall indeed see and hear of Him, and so much, that the greater

marvel will be that we shall still live and not die."

And Madonna made sign that all should be quiet, and they did as she bade. And she said piteously, "John, my son, I am fain that thou shouldst tell me all that my Son did and said, and all that has been done to Him twixt yester eve and this moment, and where He is, if thou knowest it."

And as she said this, thinking of where He might be, both speech and life well-nigh failed her.

And John shed so many tears, that his eyes seemed turned into two springs of water, as he thought of all he had seen and heard. And he answered and said: "Sweet Mother, I will tell thee, if I can. Yesterday evening, when we left ye, we went repeating hymns and psalms to Mount Olivet. And here the blessed Master placed Himself in front of us all, and He began to tell of what in that night would befall Him; and the cursed Judas departed from us and we did not perceive it. Peter declared he would go with Him unto death, and through every suffering. And the gentle Master replied to him: 'Behold, before the cock crow, three

times shalt thou deny Me.' And so it happened."

And when he said these words they all broke into tears and wailing; and he recounted all the other words that had been uttered there. "And we were all overcome with weeping and grief and sorrow when we heard these words. And then the gentle Master went from us about the length of a stone's throw, and He prayed alone for a long while, and I had so great a longing to draw near to Him, that I grew faint with the desire to be with Him and hear His words, and I even started towards Him, but I was not bold enough to go too near for fear lest I should displease Him; but still I heard certain words, and I saw the angel of God come down to speak with Him."

And he told how the apostles were heavy with sleep, and how He came to them to rouse them three times whilst He prayed. And he related how His face was bathed in a sweat of blood, and he told how at last He returned and bade them sleep in peace. "And the Good Shepherd watched over His sheep; and I stayed close beside Him, and I mourned in my heart, for I saw to what parting of the

ways we were bound to come. And after a little while He said: 'Arise, for they are near who come to take me.' And I, hearing this, well-nigh fell prone upon the earth, such grief did I feel, I, unhappy one! And they rose all dismayed at what they heard, and in a little while we saw armed men coming towards us, and the cursed Judas was with them, walking in front. And when they had arrived, the Lord said: 'Whom do ye seek?' At His voice they all fell to the ground, and they could not rise until the good Jesus again lifted His voice; and then they arose, and the cursed Judas came up to Him and kissed Him, and said: 'This is He.' Then they took Him, and bound His hands behind Him; and the Sacred Lamb made no resistance."

At these words the Magdalen could no longer control herself, but she uttered a cry so cruel and so harsh that it seemed as if her heart were breaking in two, and the others did even likewise. I will not speak of Our Lady, for each one can think for himself how it was with her; and again, desiring to hear yet more, Our Lady signed to them to keep silence.

And St. John took up the tale, and repeated the words the Lord had spoken to Judas, and to those who took Him captive; and how he himself entered into the house of the chief priest, and how Peter likewise went thither; how he denied Him, and all those things which are recounted in the *Passio;* and this he told with such weeping that he could scarcely speak.

Now think of how it was with the Magdalen, though we must suppose that she stayed quiet from respect to Madonna; she was consumed with grief and weeping, and she said to herself: "Oh, my sweet Lord, hast Thou indeed been betrayed by Thy disciple, on whom Thou hast lavished so many benefits? Now who could have believed it! Now who was bold enough to take Thee, and bind Thy hands behind Thee like a thief? Oh, my Lord! who was he who dared to strike the face of the Son of God?"

And in this way she was consumed with sorrow, recalling every word and everything He had said. But when John told how those accursed ones had shouted in His ears and said that He was guilty and worthy of death, and

thus had judged Him, and in token of this had spat in His face, at these words the Magdalen felt such anguish that I think she put her hand to her throat and tore away the wrappings thereof, crying with a loud voice: "Now is He condemned to death, the gentle and innocent Lamb, who could if He would avenge Himself, nor would He need either sword or knife." And she struck her hands together, and said: "Now who were those who dared to spit in the face of God?" And she cried: "Holy angels! oh, will ye endure to see this wrong done to your Lord and Master? Oh, ye heavens! that ye should look down upon such cruel beasts of prey! Oh, earth! why dost thou not open and engulf such pride! Ah, me, unhappy one! Too well do I discern the reason why this has come about, for God the Father has given His Son to death to redeem sinners, amongst whom am I, woe is me! Oh, sweetest Master! shall I indeed see Thee die in the clutches of these dogs. Far greater hurt to me are Thy pain and death than if my soul went to hell, as I have merited a hundred thousand times; but Thou, most innocent One, who hast never

committed any sin, that Thou shouldst be condemned as if Thou hadst done them all! Truly human nature costs Thee dear!"

Our Lady did not make such ado, for she had the most high virtue of gentleness, and she knew and comprehended these things far more than the Magdalen, but her sorrow was greater without compare. And whilst they were in such grief and pain, Our Lady said most humbly to St. John: "My son, bear in mind that if it seems well to thee to return to the temple, I would fain see and speak with my Son."

And I think St. John replied: "Most dear Mother, I think it must be well-nigh day, and we could go thither, if it seems good to thee; but I pray thee to bid the Magdalen and the others to stay quiet, for I think the Master desired that whosoever might be with thee should stay quiet by night; for thou knowest how wishful He was that all should be decorous, and it can be of no use to Him, for this deed must needs be accomplished, as Caiaphas said during the counsel, that it was meet that one should die, rather than all the people perish."

And also it seemed to Our Lady, that so they ought to do; and she humbly prayed the Magdalen and the others to refrain from crying for love of her, and so they did.

Immediately they arose and set out towards the temple, John being with them, and also many other good women of the neighbourhood, who had come thither because of the tumult; and when they arrived at the temple they found the door locked, and they could not enter in, and they waited outside, weeping sadly, for it was not yet day, though the dawn was near.

And I think that those cursed priests sent messengers to the Scribes and Pharisees, who had passed the night in taking counsel how they might best accomplish this deed.

And I think it was not easy to them, rather I think their heart quaked, for they knew well that well-nigh all the people believed in Him; so that they feared to rouse an uproar against themselves, wherefore they sought to fortify themselves inasmuch as they could. And they took counsel to send able laymen, their great friends, both noble and burgess, amongst all those who were esteemed men of worth

amongst the people; and they came, and arriving at the door of the Temple, it was opened to them, and immediately locked again. And when a great many had assembled, they came amongst them to utter all the evil they could think of concerning Messer Jesus, and they spoke thus: "We will let ye know what we think of Jesus the Nazarene, who went turning aside the people of God, feigning holiness, and we have found out for certain that He is a malefactor and a blasphemer against God, and we have heard this in His speech this very night, for with His covered words He declares He is the Son of God, and He has made many fools believe it."

And, moreover, they said that the miracles He had wrought were by the power of the prince of devils. "And this we know for certain. And He condemns the law which God gave to our Fathers, nor does He keep the Sabbath; and He boasts that He will destroy the Temple of Solomon and build it again in three days. You know if this can be done!"

And during these words many arose and gave witness concerning this matter, and many others spoke evil of Him, as much as they

could think of, and there were witnesses to everything, as they had arranged, so that nearly all these people gave counsel that if these things they told were true, it were well to sweep Him from the face of the earth, so that He could not work harm to the people of God.

But I think there were there some upright men, whom God held in His hand, who believed nothing of what these others said, but indeed thought that they did it for envy, as they did, and they remained silent, and it troubled them much, but they were not bold enough to say a word.

Finally, they were instructed to return home, and when they heard the people assembling to go amongst them and tell them all the evil they had heard of this man, and to stir up the populace, so that they might even demand that He should die; and so they promised to do, and they went out of the temple. And as they went out, many others came in, and each one was confirmed in evil.

And during this the dawn of day came, and they consulted if they should take Jesus before Pilate before the people were about; and thus they did. Of those things that were spoken

before Pilate I will say nothing, for they are recounted in the *Passio*.

But let us return to His Mother and the Magdalen, who were waiting by the door of the Temple.

And now they opened the door, and armed men began to come out. And these women rose to their feet, and the Mother looked to see if they were bringing out her sweet Son; and because she was very tall, and had risen on tip-toe, she could look into the midst of the armed men, and she saw the sweet Master with His hands tied behind Him like a thief. Now who could ever imagine the new and great pain that pierced her heart when she saw this with her eyes?

And she began to cry aloud, saying: "Oh, my sweet Son, turn Thy face hither a little, so that Thy sorrowing Mother and these others can see Thee a little."

I think that Messer Jesus, full of compassion, did so, and looked at them with His pitiful eyes. And I think that the Magdalen wanted to push in amongst the people to touch Him a little, but she could not, and she was immediately thrust back; and she began to

struggle and to cry: "Oh, my Master and my Lord, will the envy of the Scribes and Pharisees against Thee now be satiated? Now will they kill Thee, not for any sin that Thou hast done, but for envy of the good Thou hast wrought. And they have bound Him as they do thieves, Him the Lord of virtue, who moves upon the waters step by step as He would walk upon the earth! Now is this the return ye offer to Him who has given ye so many benefits? Oh, blind people! Oh, false hypocrites! in what sadness and sorrow will ye recall this gladness that ye feel now; and this is true—in conquering ye lose, and ye are the vanquished and imprisoned for all eternity, and my Lord will be glorious for ever, for He is the Son of God."

And the Magdalen did not shrink from uttering the truth, and she cared nothing either for life or death, for she was pushed to desperation.

And Messer Jesus was led to Pilate. Our Lady signed to John, and with much weeping said: "My son, follow Him, and take heed of that which is said and done, so that we shall not be left without tidings."

And St. John did accordingly. And the *Passio* relates all that they did to Him, so that I do not think it needful to relate it at length. I think St. John recounted it all to Madonna and to the others that night when they had gone home.

Now Our Lady stayed here, and I think she sought shelter in some doorway, or under some porch, in the most seemly place that she could find, to see if she could yet see or hear something.

The Magdalen wept and lamented like to a woman in labour, so that there was none who saw whom she did not make weep, so piteously did she tell her grief and that of the others. Yet a more sorrowful sight by far was Our Lady, whose grief was greater beyond compare, and so piteously did she weep, that all were melted to tears; but I will not speak of everything concerning her at length, for the Lament of St. Bernard, and the writings of the other Saints, have told of her so well, that my speech could only mar what they have said, but I only endeavour to relate of the Magdalen, concerning whom this meditation was begun.



Alinari Photo.

ST. MARY MAGDALEN AND EVENTS OF HER LIFE

After a painting of the Byzantine School at Florence

And while these women were sorrowing thus, Messer Jesus was sent from Pilate to Herod, that he might judge Him, and immediately these women saw Him, they followed Him, but so great was the crowd that they could not approach Him. So I think they went to the house of one they knew, a friend of theirs, to see what would be done. And, behold, a little after, Messer Jesus was sent back to Pilate, clothed in white, and the women and the others seeing this new thing knew not what it might mean, save only His Mother, who, I think, understood all things well.

And now I think they returned, following Him, to Pilate's palace, and into the piazza, where so many people had collected that scarcely could it contain them, being all upon one side thereof, so that they might see and hear what was done to Messer Jesus.

And, behold, Pilate came to the window, and said to the people: "Behold, I find no fault in this Man; neither has Herod found Him guilty of aught."

And being wishful to satisfy a little these ravening men, he said: "I will have Him corrected and scourged, so that He will not gain-

say ye, and then I will let Him go about His business."

Then those who accused Him raised a great uproar, and said: "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have given Him into thy hands."

Pilate arose and commanded that He should be scourged at the Pillar.

Now think how it fared with His Mother's heart, who knew all that they were doing, and saw Him with the eyes of her mind, though she could not see Him with her human eyes. And seeing that Pilate made excuse for Jesus, the Magdalen, and the others who were there, took a little hope, and they said: "Neither he nor Herod have found any fault in Him, and they say truly."

But when they heard that He was to be scourged and beaten, they gave vent to their grief.

Now Messer Jesus was scourged at the Pillar and covered with blood, then they unbound Him, and putting on His garment, they led Him back to Pilate; and I think that drops of His blood flowed at every step. And when He had come to Pilate, Pilate led Him forth

on to the balcony, and said: "Behold your King! I have had Him scourged. Let Him go, for I find no fault in Him."

And they replied: "If thou dost let Him go, we will accuse thee before Cæsar, for thou art no friend of his."

Pilate was afraid, but wishing to free Him, he still retained Him, and put it to their decision whether he should free at that Passover, Jesus, or Barabbas who was a thief; and they replied at once that he should let Barabbas go free; and shouting, they demanded that Jesus should be crucified, condemned by the voice of the populace.

Then Pilate was angry, and he said: "Do as ye will."

And, behold, the sentence that Messer Jesus should be crucified was given about tierce.

Now think, oh soul, how it was with that Mother's heart, and with that of the Magdalen, when they heard this sentence. For my part, I know not how to speak of it. I think their heart's pain was so great and immeasurable that no soul could gauge it; and see, even to-day, when the Gospel is read, there is no one who does not weep at that passage which says,

"Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and whose heart does not seem to soften with a great pity. Now what must it have been to His Mother and the Magdalen who loved Him so? I can find no way to gauge their grief. I think they died a thousand deaths of cruel pain, and yet they could not die, for it was not God's will.

And when the sentence had been passed they began to prepare the implements, that is, the wood of the Cross, the ladder, the nails, the hammer, and the other things needful for this deed. And during this, I think, He was given into the hands of ruffians, lay-clerks, and semi-priests of the temple, who had taken upon themselves their master's grudge against Him; and by these, and some of Pilate's household, He was again stripped, and clothed in an old purple garment, and they blindfolded His eyes, and crowned Him with thorns, and kneeling before Him, they said: "*Ave Rex Judæorum!* prophesy who strikes Thee."

And they hit Him with reeds upon the head so that the thorns pierced to His brain. This the Magdalen did not see. His Mother, though she did not see it, knew all. I think that John the Evangelist saw it, for he was up there

with Him, and his grief and pain, therefore, were greater than any could estimate.

And when the implements were ready Messer Jesus was brought to the ground-floor of the palace, crowned with thorns, and wearing the purple over His other garments, and His hands were tied, and He was led into the middle of the piazza into the midst of this so great a crowd.

Now think, each of ye, what affliction was theirs, when this Mother and the Magdalen saw our Lord thus treated!

Then His Mother lifted her voice and cried: "What hast Thou suffered, dearest Son, that Thou art thus lacerated! Oh, my Life! Oh, Heart of my body! Never has sin been found in Thee! And Pilate bore witness to this many times this morning before all the people, for he could find no fault in Thee." And she cried to the Jews: "Have mercy! Have mercy on my Son! for if ye must needs kill Him, at least do not torture Him. Why do ye make Him die a thousand deaths? Why are ye so cruel? Certain am I that ye know He is innocent."

And whilst she said these words they un-

bound His hands, and laid the wood of the Cross upon His shoulders, and He held it with His holy hands.

Then Our Lady sat down upon the ground, and raised her eyes to heaven, and she said with a loud cry: "Oh heavenly Father! see how it is with Thy dear Son, and yet they will have no mercy! I pray Thee have pity on Him, and send Thine angels to help carry this so heavy wood, that He may not die under so great a toil. Oh, most dear Son! also the heavens seemed sealed against Thee, and it seems that God will never in anything hearken to Thee!"

Moreover, I think that when the Magdalen saw her Master so ill-used she fell swooning, and she had not the fortitude to stay watching everything. And when Madonna sat down she found the Magdalen stretched at her side, and seeming dead, her face covered with blood, her hair dishevelled, and there ever flowed from her eyes what seemed to be two streams of water, and to see her she seemed almost another crucified. I think Our Lady was full of pity, and that she prayed for her, saying: "Heavenly Father, since it is Thy will that

she should not die of this grief, I beseech Thee give her strength, so that she may bear to see all they do to my Son, that it may remain for ever in her memory while she lives."

I think her prayer was heard, and at this moment there came St. John the Evangelist, and he said: "Up, let us follow Him, and die with Him, if we can."

Then Madonna lifted the Magdalen; and when she was lifted she looked and saw Messer Jesus, who had already gone some way with the wood upon His shoulders. And she said: "Oh, is my heart of stone that it does not break to see such outrage and such pain!" And she began to cry louder: "Oh, innocent Lamb! where art Thou going with that wood, so long and so great, upon Thy shoulders? Oh, ye people! have mercy on me! Take that Cross from off the shoulders of my Lord, and put it on mine; I promise ye to carry it whithersoever ye will." And she said: "Alas! it is I, unhappy one, who should be carrying that wood for my sins, and my Lord bears it for me, nor can I help Him."

And this and many other sorrowful words she said weeping.

And the Lord was going into the distance, and the crowd was so great that they could scarcely see Him, nor could they push in amongst the other people.

I think that John said: "Let us go by another road and meet them, and maybe we shall be able to touch Him, or at least approach so close that we may better see Him."

And so they did forthwith. And when they reached the place, I think that Messer Jesus delayed to come, for He was moving so slowly. But ere long He came near to His Mother and the Magdalen, and they, turning down the hill, saw His face; and if it had not been for the cross upon His shoulders, and the crown of thorns upon His head, they could not have recognised Him, for His face was livid and as if dead, His beard was torn and streaked with the blood drawn by the thorns, and He seemed a leper. And when His Mother saw Him thus ill-used, it is told in the Book of the Life of Christ that she fell swooning upon the ground; and the Magdalen threw herself down by her side, and prayed God that she might not die, but live

so that she might see all they did to her Son. And she besought her Master and said: "Alas! I will not die now, which perhaps would be less suffering; rather will I live, and bear with my Master so much anguish, that I may die a hundred deaths, and if I cannot diminish His pain, at least I will increase mine."

And as she was saying this, I think Messer Jesus passed mounting on His way, and I think He turned His face and looked at His Mother thus prone upon the ground, and with His power He raised her.

And when His Mother saw that her Son was drawing nearer, I think that she and the Magdalen would have flung themselves towards Him to get closer, but I think they were not allowed, but they kept as near as they could; and, moreover, there were other women who went lifting their voices in lamentation. Christ turned a little towards them and said: "Do not weep for Me, but for yourselves and for your children," and some other words.

And when they took the Cross from Him, they goaded Him on, piercing Him with the lanceheads to make Him go more swiftly;

and the benign Lord tried to go more swiftly. Thus the gentle Lamb went to the slaughter, and He did not open His lips to murmur.

And as soon as they had arrived on Mount Calvary they began to adjust the Cross with ladders, and to prepare everything; and the good Jesus stood there in the midst of wolves who were eager to devour Him.

The people were so many that there was scarcely place for them.

His Mother and the Magdalen wept and cried and lamented in sorrowful words, but none heard them, save certain people close by, who wept together with them.

And now the first thing that those cruel soldiers of Pilate did was to begin to strip Messer Jesus; and when His Mother saw her Son naked, her heart impelled her, and she said: "This I cannot bear!" and she took the veil from her head and pushed forward amongst the people. And St. John, seeing that she wished to go to Him, went before, pushing aside the people, and saying: "Make way for this sorrowing Mother;" and they gave place immediately, and whoever looked wept to see her.

And it was God's will that she, and the Magdalen with her, should go to Him; and so they came to Him, and His Mother took her veil and bound it round Him, and knotted it securely. And besides doing this, she said to her Son: "My blessed Son, Thou art going to die for human nature, go and be Thou blessed as much as Thy Father can bless Thee; and I pray Thee that Thou wilt not forsake Thy Mother, oh my Son! Let me share Thy suffering, oh Life of my soul."

I think Messer Jesus wept for pity of His Mother, and I think He said nought else to them, save: "Be strong in suffering, for thus is the victory gained over my enemies."

I think that the Magdalen threw herself at His feet, and touched them, and kissed them with many tears; and thereupon those accursed ones had seized Him and taken Him out of their hands, and led Him towards the Cross, and those two and the other women who were with them turned away from so many people, and when they turned back again they saw Messer Jesus mounting the ladder with His hands and feet. When their eyes perceived this, so great was their lamentation that it

seemed as if all heaven and earth were weeping, and the other people wept for pity of Him, and of His Mother, and of the Magdalen, who was uttering such piteous words as well-nigh broke the hearts of all who heard her.

And I think Messer Jesus climbed the ladder with His hands and feet voluntarily. The Centurion, who was afterwards saved, saw this, and, as a wise man, he said to himself: "What marvel is this? It seems that this Prophet goes voluntarily to be hung on the Cross, and He makes no resistance nor complaint."

And while he thus wondered to see Him, Messer Jesus arrived as high as need be; and He turned on the ladder, and opened His kingly arms, and offered His hands to those who were to nail them diligently.

When the Centurion, looking at Him, saw Him do thus, I think he thought to himself, inspired by God: "Truly this matter has some other meaning that is not seen." And I think that there were there also some good and faithful men to whom God gave grace to think thus.

Now when she saw this done, consider how

the Magdalen thought in her heart of the great love of God, and she was stupefied like a woman who is mortally wounded in the centre of her heart by a dagger, and she knew not what to say or do.

And when they had finished nailing Messer Jesus, they hung the thieves upon their crosses, one on one side, and one on the other. When the Magdalen saw this indignity done to her Master, she began to cry aloud, saying: "Do not do it! Do not do it! Crucify me on the other side, for I have deserved it a thousand times, and it will be a consolation to me, if ye will wreak vengeance on me; and thus I should die beside my Master. I beseech ye to show me this mercy."

Now think how it was with His Mother, when she saw this. And the Magdalen cried from afar, for she could not approach Him, and she said: "O King of kings! O Lord of lords! do I indeed see Thee in the midst of two thieves? Now where are those angels who should serve Thee and praise Thee in *sæcula sæculorum?* Now whither has Thine ineffable charity led Thee? whither has Thine immeasurable love, whither Thy pity, brought and

placed Thee? Between two thieves! Thou, the dear Son of God, hast come on earth to such shame and degradation that Thou art judged with thieves by these hounds! Lord, the wish is born within me to hate my soul, for which Thou dost bear such suffering! Oh, what need hadst Thou of men? Oh, what need hadst Thou of me or of other sinners? Wast Thou not served and accompanied in Thy glory by armies of angels? Alas! what has placed Thee on a Cross between two thieves? For certain, Messer, it is Thy compassion for the souls of sinners on their way to hell. And Thou, Son of God! Oh, what sorrowful change is this from angels to thieves? Oh holy angels! if ye weep not now, when will ye weep? Ah, Messer! may all those things that Thou hast made with Thy hands weep, because I see Thee nailed to the wood of the Cross, because I see Thy blood dropping even on to the earth!"

And so piteous was this to hear, that whoever saw her wept bitterly.

I think that His Mother was outwardly more moderate than the Magdalen, but her grief was immeasurably greater; but indeed

the cup of suffering was full to the brim for both of these.

And now that the Crucifixion was complete, nearly all the people began to go away, for it was past the dinner hour, so that every one turned homeward, save the Centurion, and those of Pilate's household, who kept watch over these bodies, that none should touch them until they were dead; but I think they concealed themselves and stayed thenceforward in the shade.

And I think there were there some of the Scribes and Pharisees with their disciples, and these were they who mocked and insulted Him, as it is related in the *Passio*, and moreover they would not go except they saw Him dead, for they were still afraid lest this matter should not be well achieved.

And when the people had departed and moved away, Our Lady with her companions and St. John and the Magdalen came to the foot of the Cross, and they looked upon the most Holy Blood of the Son of God; and I think they knelt down with great reverence, and kissed the earth that was near to that blood, and Our Lady said to the earth: "Thou

hast never received such grace and such honour since thou wast created! Behold, the Son of God mingles Himself with thee and rests upon thee."

And the Magdalen arose, and leaning against the Cross she stretched up her arms to try and touch those holy feet at which she had received such mercy. I think that not being able to reach them, she said: "Alas! my Lord! why did I not touch Thee more often when I could? Ah, unhappy that I am, that so late did I perceive my need!"

I think that Our Lady sat down opposite the Cross, and kept her eyes turned up and fixed upon the person of her Son, and she gazed upon His face and form, and she could not see that He retained anything of His former semblance, for here He was bruised, and there He was lacerated, and the veil that she had bound round Him was already much stained with blood, and He had the aspect of a leper.

And she raised her eyes to heaven, and she said to God the Father: "Look down upon Thy Son, and see how He has been treated; and Thou hast more pity for the souls that go astray than for Him! O Lord! who can



Levy Photo.

CHRIST APPEARING TO THE MAGDALEN

After the painting by Le Sueur in the Louvre

ever requite a benefit such as this—that Thou shouldst give Thy Son to so shameful a death to redeem slaves?"

I think the Magdalen placed herself a little behind and beyond Madonna, so that she might heed no other thing, but only watch her Master; and I think she kept her tongue still, so that she might not add to the sufferings of her Master. And I think she said silently in her heart: "Lord, I pray Thee, grieve not for our grief, since Thou knowest that it is good for us, and Thy suffering is such, that I think no soul can gauge it. Verily, Messer, rather would I die a thousand deaths than add to Thy pain; and Thou knowest, Messer, that if I compassionate Thee in Thine anguish, it is the medicine of my soul, which soul I would hate and wish in hell bearing all the pains that are there, rather than see Thee in such suffering to save me, a sinner; but Thou wilt not have it so; on the contrary Thou hast come that I may not fall into the depths of hell. Wherefore, my Lord, inflict this suffering upon me, as I stand here, so that living yet I may die as many times as I have offended Thee. And I beseech Thee compassionate me not, when Thou

doest see me suffer, for Thou knowest it is meet and just."

The Magdalen recollected that whilst she was weeping for her brother Lazarus, He also wept; wherefore I think she uttered these words bidding Him feel no pity for her and the others, so that nothing should be added over and above His pain, which appeared greater than words could tell. So she said of herself that she did not mind suffering, rather she wished to endure more than any in this world could measure.

And at about the hour of noon the Lord spoke the Words from the Cross. I do not take upon myself to repeat them, for they are written elsewhere, save that word when He said, "I thirst!" for I think this saying was a deeper stab to His Mother and the Magdalen than any they had felt yet.

When He was near to death Messer Jesus cried with a loud voice, and said that He thirsted. The Saints interpreting this word say that He thirsted for our salvation; but also, we must believe, that He felt a cruel thirst according to His humanity, for all night and all day He had been weary and tormented, and none

amongst those who could have helped Him was found to have pity; and now upon the Cross His life was ebbing away, and pressed out like grape-juice in the vats, and His mouth was dry and black, so that He seemed scarcely able to speak; and when He lifted a loud voice it was not with the strength that He could have according to His humanity, but it was through the power of His divinity, and was held miraculous by those who saw Him so near, so near to death, and uttering so great a cry.

Now think what it must have been to His Mother and the Magdalen, she, seeing Her Son, and the Magdalen, her Master, so dearly loved by them, thirsting at the hour of death. They heard Him ask to drink, and they could not give to Him; and when do I see your sons want for a drop to moisten their lips when dying, and diminish the pain!

Now what could they do? for they were provided with neither wine nor water, and indeed, had they had thereof they could not have reached His mouth. His Mother had already before this faced these things in thought, but her anguish was not therefore lessened, but she knew God had ordained it thus. The

the point of death? And worse still, I see them offer Thee another bitterness, beyond that which Thou hast! Alas, O my Life! why did I not die when I was a little child, for I was brought up with Thee, and at least mine eyes would not have seen such cruelty inflicted upon Thy person, I, who am unable to help Thee in little things or great!"

And the Evangelist wept, consumed with grief for his Brother and Master.

I say nothing of Our Lady, for it should be very easy to think of how it was with her and what was the immensity of her grief; and I say this of the Magdalen, that when she saw this last insult—that is, the offering of vinegar and gall to the lips of the Son of God thus exhausted—I think her suffering was so cruel and so much increased that I know not how to speak of it. I think that when she saw Him die a little later, her grief was not greater than this; and now she would lament no more, for Messer Jesus said, "Consummatum est," and He began to enter into the passage of death, and to yield up His Spirit. And so she stayed quiet forthwith not to hinder Him, and in order

to see the soul pass from this blessed body. And His Mother and all the others stayed quiet and in silence whilst Messer Jesus died and left this life; and we can imagine how great was the silent grief and the mute weeping. And at the moment when Messer Jesus bowed His head, and when His soul left His body, His Mother fell swooning, and her sisters received her in their arms, and thinking that she had expired, they mourned for the Son and the Mother at one and the same time.

Here follows a most pious meditation: that is, the thought that instantly the heavens were opened, and armies of angels descended to sing round about the Son of God a sweeter melody and in greater gladness than ever they had sung since they had been created, and they sang all the verses of the incarnation, and of the union they saw thus brought about with the divinity of God. And indeed it was a just thing that that soul, which had borne so many and such great sufferings for the love of charity, should now, having left the body, be greeted with such glorious thanksgiving, and received with such rever-

ence and jubilation. And so the sacred soul of Messer Jesus was surrounded by so many thousands of angels that one could never count them. And the heavens being open, we can imagine how He looked up into the face of His Father with consummate reverence. His Father blessed Him with the joy of great love; and so great was the festival and the gladness in Heaven that it is far more pleasurable to imagine and think of it than to speak thereof.

What shall we say of His Mother who was left at the foot of the Cross? I think her soul was drawn into that heavenly contemplation, that she might see Messer Jesus, her most dear Son, thus glorified, surrounded by His angels, who thus willingly honoured Him with consummate gladness.

And her blessed Son desired that His Mother, so afflicted and sorrowful, should be somewhat comforted by the sight of Him thus gloriously resting in the air above Mount Calvary, where His body hung upon the Cross, and He had not risen very high according to what I think. Therefore the soul of His Mother was close to her Son,

and she saw the honour done to Him, and He turned towards her, and comforted her with great gladness, and all the holy angels did Him reverence.

Now, what shall we say of Satan? He had ever been on the look-out to discover if Messer Jesus were God, and many efforts had he made to find it out, but none had succeeded. Now he knew and saw manifestly with grief and sorrow of heart that He was the Son of God, although he could still take Him to Limbo as he did the other holy souls who left this life; but he could not approach Him, such was the odour of His charity, and so great was the melody and the sweetness of that glory that he could not come near. He lamented with many cries, and he said to his companions: "Now I perceive that this is He, spoken of by the Holy Prophets, who foretold that the Son of God would come to deliver His people; He has deceived us with His wisdom; now we shall lose our dominion over human nature, and we shall be bound in perpetual captivity."

And all the other devils, his followers, blasphemed, and they turned to him and blamed him, because he had not known, for it mattered

greatly that he should have had so little wisdom and so little prudence. And the archangel Michael passed amongst them, and reproved them, saying: "Certain your pride has deceived ye, for ye did not believe that the Creator knew more than the creature. Away with ye and vanish, for the Strong Warrior, the Lord of Virtue and the King of Glory has delivered His people; He will descend into Limbo, and will lead away His friends, and will establish them in the place whence ye were chased through your pride!"

And when Satan heard these words, he knew not what to answer, but they said all together: "Let us go amongst our legions, and withstand this Jesus, that He may not take away our possessions, that is, the holy souls which we hold in captivity in Limbo." And thus they did.

Now let us return to the good Jesus, for it delights me to think about Him for still a little while before He went to Limbo.

Although the soul of Christ had left His body, still all the blood was not yet shed, for some yet remained in His heart; but when Longinus came and pierced His side with a lance, and opened the heart of Christ, the blood

all flowed out, and the price of our redemption was completed: and the saints say, that when all His blood was shed, the doors of Paradise were opened.

And it pleases me to think that Messer Jesus lingered a little to see the sacrifice accomplished, so that He might say to the Holy Fathers in Limbo: "Come, for the gate of Paradise is open!"

Moreover, I think He stayed a little to comfort His Mother by the sight of Him thus glorified and free from suffering.

And when Messer Jesus saw that Pilate's servants were coming to Mount Calvary to take down the bodies from the crosses, He said to His Mother: "Go, most gentle Mother, and take care of My body, and that flesh which came of thine; and rest sure, that the third day I will return with that same body, which I drew from thee, made resplendent, and this shall be to thine honour and glory in eternity."

Then Our Lady, who had swooned, rose up at once, and she saw those furious men, and she saw them pierce with a lance the side of that sacred body; and the soul of

Christ went down to Limbo with multitudes of angels.

And St. John said to himself: "O John! what wilt thou do? Thou hast lost thy Master, and when thou didst hear Him speak, thou didst seem to be in Paradise, for His words were of eternal life; and more than this, thou hast lost His Mother who loved thee so tenderly! Now, who will give tears to mine eyes and a stab of pain to my heart, such that I may die together with them?"

And all those other women lifted so great a lamentation, that it seemed as if heaven and earth were weeping.

And when Christ's soul departed, the sun was darkened, and the shades of night were over all the world, the stones were broken, and the mountains and tombs gaped asunder.

And when the Centurion, who was on guard, saw that Messer Jesus was dying, I think he went before Him, and stood respectfully at a little distance from the women, to watch Him pass away. And when he saw that Messer Jesus was dead, and noticed all these signs in the sun, and in other things, he cried with a

loud voice, saying: "Verily this was the Son of God." And indeed he spoke truly.

Oh, Centurion! thou soldier who wast sent there to watch Messer Jesus! Good wage didst thou receive, and well filled was thy soul's purse with truth. Many came thither, who yet did not take home that which thou didst carry thence.

Now, what shall we say of the Magdalen? I think that when she saw Messer Jesus pass away, and His Mother prostrate and seemingly dead, that she clenched her fists, and her body was twisted almost into a coil, and her heart seemed drained in her body, as grapes in the press, and all her form writhed; she trembled so that she could utter no word, and she remained thus possessed with her eyes fixed upon the Cross, and there seemed to be no help for her.

Now when the people of the city saw these new wonders that showed in the sun and in the other things, how it was made dark as night and the stars were seen as at midnight, I think a great murmuring arose amongst them, and many cried: "What have our priests and pontiffs done? They have killed this Jesus of

Nazareth, and these signs have appeared in heaven and on earth for Him, and they did it for envy and for nought else."

And they cried aloud: "It would be only just to set their houses afire, for we fear lest their envy should cost us dear." Wherefore I think they were much afraid, and the friends of Messer Jesus took courage a little; and I think that Joseph and Nicodemus, when they saw that Messer Jesus was dead, went to prepare the shroud and the other things needful in order to take Him down from the Cross and to place Him in the sepulchre. And before the hour of vespers they went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave it them. Then he sent some of his household to remove the bodies from the crosses, so that they should not be there during the day of the Passover.

First Joseph arrived.

Then Our Lady feared for the body, lest they should insult it yet more, and the Magdalen straightened herself suddenly; and His Mother and those other women knelt humbly praying them that they would inflict no other outrage upon her Son, for they could see well

that He was dead; and they did not answer, for they knew well that Pilate had given the body to Joseph. Then one of that household, named Longinus, moved forward, and struck the side of Messer Jesus with a lance, so that he wounded His heart; and immediately both blood and water flowed copiously.

And I think St. John began to weep and cry out, saying: "What do ye think to do? Do ye not see that He is dead?"

And the soldier approached nearer, and a drop of Christ's blood touched his eye which was blind, and immediately the sight was restored, and he cried: "Truly this was the Son of God."

And I think he went to Our Lady and St. John, and kneeling, he beat his breast with many tears, and besought their pardon.

Our Lady said: "Rise up, for my Son has given us this doctrine—that is, to render good to those who do us harm—and see! He Himself has done thus to thee, giving us an example thereof; and indeed it has been for thy welfare that thou hast come hither, for thou hast received light to both body and soul."

And all the more did he accuse himself, and resolve to be a true Christian, and so he was for ever after.

I think that Our Lady had great support in her grief, for she knew that this must needs be; and moreover she saw that her Son was dead, and that they could not add to His pain. The Magdalen did not know so much as Madonna; she saw indeed that He was dead, and could suffer no more pain, but it seemed to her such outrage and such degradation, that it was as if that lance had entered the centre of her heart, and she began to lament and say: "Oh, my Lord! they still hunger to torment Thee! Oh, hearts of stone! how can ye dare to rend His heart with a lance, seeing that He is already dead? Will ye never be satisfied?"

And turning, she saw that Longinus had come to acknowledge his fault; she marvelled that any of them should have owned himself wrong, but her grief was such that it would admit of no consolation.

I think those of Pilate's household took down the bodies of the thieves and threw them to a little distance; and likewise did they with

the crosses, and Jesus crucified remained alone, and they went home.

The mother of Jesus, the Magdalen, and John and the other women remained at the foot of the Cross, abandoned by all the world, sorrowful and weeping, and they discerned not what remedy might be found.

Now what a pitiful thing was this, to see the Queen of the world, and the King of angels, incarnate for love of us, thus forsaken and desolate! And He might well have called His angels, had He been so willed; and quickly would they have come, and right willingly, but He desired that men should accomplish this matter.

I think that His sweet Mother turned to St. John and said to him sadly: "My son, what shall we do? It is now well-nigh evening; who will help us to take my Son down from the Cross? Behold, we are forsaken if God will not help us."

Then I think they all began to wail loudly for the pity of it; and St. John wept so bitterly that he could scarcely speak: "What would ye have me do? I would go to the city and fetch people who would help us, but I would

fain not leave ye alone without me in such a place! Let us pray our Heavenly Father that He will help us in this difficulty, and teach us what we ought to do."

And the Mother said: "Thou sayest well, my son; and it is not to be believed that help will not come quickly."

And when the Magdalen heard these words she renewed her weeping and her grief, so that she seemed a woman distraught. And she said: "Oh, my Lord! what evil chance is this? Oh! what hope can one place in men? Oh! is it not scarcely eight days since all the world was following Thee, praising and blessing Thy name, and he who could touch and see Thee held himself blest indeed? Now what hast Thou done since then, O my Hope! in what crime have they found Thee out, O Thou Desire of my Soul? Truly the hopes of this life are vain, and false, and unhappy is the man who trusts in the world." And raising her voice, she cried: "Now, where are ye, Peter, James, Matthew, and all ye others? Are ye afraid of death? Now, would not death be better far, than to face life one moment without your Master? Do ye hold

your earthly life more dear than the life of your souls, or than being with Him? Alas! indeed, to-day is a day of grief and darkness."

And I think she arose and said: "I will go to the city and seek some of my friends, who will come and help me to unfasten my Lord from the Cross."

And I think John had already arisen, and was watching to see if any should come towards them, by whom he might send a message to the town bidding certain friends come thither to help; and he saw in the distance certain people coming. And he said to the Magdalen: "Do not go; for maybe on thy return thou would find that some new thing had happened, and thou wouldst repent of having gone. I see people coming towards us, and I know not who they are, nor what they would do."

The Magdalen humbly turned back, and she said softly in her heart, so as not to renew Madonna's sorrow: "Oh, my Lord! what will they do to Thee? Shall I see them inflict yet more insults upon Thy body? I shall not be able to bear this; but, indeed, I think my heart is of stone that I still live."

And whilst she was thinking thus, John came back to them and said: "Take comfort, sweet Mother, here are Joseph and Nicodemus, and their companions, who have surely come to help us."

Then it seemed that the Mother revived, and kneeling she gave thanks to her Heavenly Father who had sent them, and she said to John: "Go to them, my son, and thank them for their coming, for we were forsaken by all."

And thus he did.

Now what a piteous thing it was to see, when John reached Nicodemus; they clasped each other's hands, weeping bitterly, and he said: "Reverend Father Joseph, come and see our sweet Master, whom they have tortured like a beast, and none moved to help Him."

And Joseph embraced him weeping the while, and he said: "My son, none would have been able to help Him, for it seems that God has permitted malice and the heirs of this world to rule in this matter and for this moment."

But when Joseph arrived upon the Mount and saw Jesus on high upon the cross, so

gaunt and so stained with blood that he could not recognise that it was Himself, he rent his garments, and was consumed with weeping, and likewise did Nicodemus and all those others with him.

And then the Mother and the Magdalen and the other women went to meet them with many tears, and the Mother threw herself on the ground and said: "God reward thee, reverend Father Joseph, for we were forsaken by all, and knew not what resolution to take."

Then I think Joseph, inspired by God, said: "Comfort thee, dear Mother, for in dying thy Son has won victory over His enemies."

She knew it well, but nevertheless it rejoiced her much that this venerable father should be thus enlightened with the truth; and immediately Joseph and Nicodemus made these people give place, and they adjusted the ladders; and Joseph, removing his cloak, climbed the ladder on the right hand, and Nicodemus that on the other side, with those tools that were necessary to unnail the hands. Oh, how bitter and grievous was that unnailing! for the nails were so fast that the hands must needs be

rent to draw them out. And when they had unfastened the hands, Joseph took the body in his arms and began to descend the ladder until the Mother could reach her Son with her hands, and the Magdalen also put up her hand, but they would not pull lest they should do hurt to Joseph, who was supporting the whole weight; and immediately Nicodemus put his hands to the feet and began to unnail them, and I think that John adjusted another ladder that he might help Joseph to support the body.

And when Magdalen saw them unfasten those precious feet, I think that she said with a sorrowful cry: "Oh, dear Nicodemus! deal gently with them, that thou dost not rend them, for at those feet I, a wretched sinner, found such mercy. Oh, my soul! unhappy and sorrowful one! when wilt thou receive Him in thine arms, thus pierced and stained with blood. Now, can my heart still endure, and still not break in two. I know it is turned to stone, for I would not have believed that I could live had I heard related that which I have seen!"

And when they had accomplished the un-

fastening, Joseph and Nicodemus brought Him down, and John, taking off his cloak, spread it at a little distance opposite the Cross, and they laid thereon the body of Messer Jesus; and Our Lady threw herself down upon His face and breast, and the Magdalen upon His feet, and the others round about, and the lamentation was such and so great and piteous that it seemed as if the very stones were weeping together with all the creatures of the world.

And I think that Joseph and Nicodemus went to look at the sepulchre, where they would lay Him, to see that all was well in order, but John would not leave the Treasure (Madonna), who had been given into his care.

And the Magdalen held the feet in her hands, her face bowed upon them, and she washed them with her tears more lavishly than ever before; and indeed they had need thereof, for they were all blood-stained and bruised and dusty, for He had walked barefoot, and other means of washing them she had none, and she endeavoured to bathe the legs also a little, and she shed abundant tears, so that she might bathe them, and dry them

with her hair. And she remembered that she had put by her a little box of that precious ointment kept from that evening when they had gone to see if they might use it for Him, for since then she had ever been careful of it. And she took of this ointment and began to anoint His feet and limbs, and when she came to the wound in His feet she put it in with her finger; and I think the wound was so large that she could put it in with her finger; then she uttered a great cry, laid her face thereon, saying: "Thou beloved of all good things! What have these feet done that they should be thus pierced! Oh! may the sight of this be a nail fixed in my heart, even if I should live to the end of the world."

And Our Lady likewise bathed with her tears her Son's face, which was stained with blood and blistered with the tears that He had shed so abundantly. And maybe she yet discerned thereon the spittle with which they had insulted Him, and she said: "Dearest Son, the salvation of human nature hath cost Thee dear."

And lifting her eyes on high for a little, she said: "Come, ye holy angels, and see if



Brogi Photo.

THE MAGDALEN

After the painting by Guido Reni at Genoa

ye recognise the face of your King, the face of the Sun of Justice. Now what sorrowful invitation is this that I make, O my most dear Son!"

I think that those sisters of Madonna took each one a hand, and, as far as they were able, bathed it with tears.

I think that at this moment Joseph and Nicodemus came back, and they said respectfully: "Madonna, it is expedient that we should prepare this Body and lay it in the sepulchre, for the hour is late already, and it would not be meet to stay the night here; it would not be seemly."

Then I think that Our Lady, ever full of gentleness and wisdom, and who had not lost her reason, though her grief had been greater than any ever on earth, replied: "If it is time for that, I will help ye with mine own hands to make ready my blessed Son."

And I think that even thus it was done, and they embalmed that most Holy Body with aloes which they brought thither; and I think the Magdalen gave her box of ointment to Madonna, and said: "Dearest Mother, put of this ointment into the wounds of His hands

and side, and on His face and head, for thou knowest that He bade me reserve some of it for His burial."

And Our Lady did so.

The Magdalen then said: "Oh, sorrowful sight, my Sweet Master! from the moment Thou didst tell me this an arrow entered my heart, but I did not think to see this unhappy moment so soon." And again she cried: "Ah! too late have I known and loved Thee, O my Lord! Now how short a time have I been with Thee! How can I live without Thee, Life of my soul? I will not that any should comfort me, but I will ever weep and lament over that which I have seen them do to Thee, my Lord."

And this she said so piteously that all who heard her began to weep again; and a cloth was given her that she should wrap His feet therein, and then she began to grieve once more, saying: "Oh, King of kings! is this the last service I shall ever render Thee? is this the last time I shall anoint Thy feet? How shall I live, my Master being dead? How can I have house or home if I do not see Thee? What shall I do when I cannot hear Thy

speech? O Lord, I beseech Thee to take pity upon the sinner Mary."

And when everything was made ready, they lifted the old cloak whereon He was laid, and carried Him to the sepulchre; and Our Lady carried the head, and the Magdalen the feet. The Magdalen went weeping, and ever renewing her tears, and indeed she had reason therefore, and she said: "Oh, King of angels! where are Thy royal adornments in this Thy need? Where is the precious cloth on which Thy Body should be carried? Behold! an old cloak, that is scarcely worth four pennies! Where is the cloth of gold that should be spread over Thy Body? Where is the crown of gems and precious stones? Thine was a crown of thorns that has wounded Thy head to the brain. Certain it is plain to see that Thou dost hold the honours of this world for nothing. Oh, my Master! Thou who hast done this to Thyself, reveal to me, and teach me what I should do, and what Thou desirest done!"

And while saying this, they arrived at the place where was the sepulchre, and they put down the Body; and the Magdalen went to

look into the sepulchre, and she began to cry, saying: "Oh, my Lord! this then is Thy last resting-place on earth!—a hollow stone!—Thou who all day and all night hast been wearied by such grievous and bitter burdens! This is Thy teaching to me!"

And indeed the Magdalen spoke truly, for she foresaw the hollow stone where she would rest in the desert.

I say nothing here of Our Lady, for elsewhere it is all said so well that I would not mar with mine the greater devotion; but I tell of the Magdalen, about whom I began this meditation, and every one must understand that the grief of that sorrowing Mother was the greatest grief that ever was in the world.

And when they laid the Body in the tomb, I think His Mother helped with her own hands; and it delights me much to think that she had such great fortitude and strength; and I know well that I could not imagine her so great but the truth would be greater. And it seems to us to-day the greatest of deeds when a mother has the fortitude to inter with her own hands her eldest-born, and one whom she has loved much, and can do this

without showing weakness; every one holds her in high esteem, as one valiant in wisdom, and much they love her. What shall we therefore say of her, now nigh her Son, who was more virtuous than any other creature? I think of her that her sorrow was greater than any soul could gauge; nevertheless, such was her gift of fortitude that she governed herself, and left nothing undone of that which was meet to do, in order to give an ample example of virtue to the world.

But what shall we say of the Magdalen, who was most tender of heart, and whose grief so overwhelmed her that she seemed well-nigh crazed?

And when she perceived that the Body of her Master was taken from her, so that she could neither see nor touch Him, it seemed to her that no remedy was left her; and wringing her hands, she cried and said: "What do ye think to do? Do ye intend to wrench my heart from my body? Now how can I live without seeing my Master! I have no other but Him! At least let me see Him, dead though He be; let me stay with Him."

And when they would shut the tomb, the

Mother blessed her Son, saying: "My Son, I recommend Thee to Thy Father, who sent Thee on earth for our salvation, and Thou hast accomplished His behests. May He send His angels to watch over Thee, since I, thy sorrowful Mother, may no longer stay beside Thee."

But I think the Magdalen, who was close to her, put her hands upon the stone and would not let them shut it, and consumed with many tears, she said: "I implore ye for the love of the one God, if ye feel any pity for me, and would comfort my soul a little, let me stay here within this sepulchre, at the foot thereof, and then shut it. I will stay quiet and I will not move, and it seems to me that I shall be consoled indeed, if I can die at His feet, where I received such mercy. Oh! unhappy that I am, why did I not use the time when I could? Why did I not ever follow Him, kissing the earth where He placed His feet?"

And I think St. John chid her, saying: "Take away thine hands, and do not do that which thou shouldst not."

I think Our Lady had pity on her, and said: "My daughter, arise, for it is meet

that we should come even to this bitter separation."

Then I think that the Magdalen fell to the ground possessed of such sorrow, that it seemed as if she must needs die.

Then each one of them turned to touch our Lord, and they all recommended themselves to Him, and then they closed the tomb; and St. John lent thereon his face and arm, and weeping sorrowfully, he said: "A bitter parting is this, O my Lord, when I think that I must needs return home without Thee, and when I think that I must lead back the sorrowful Mother without her Son! Now who will give us comfort? Who can help us, for it seems that all our most dear friends have left us, and they, who formerly went seeking the life of their souls, that is, Christ the Son of God, now are afraid and overcome with bodily cowardice, and they have forsaken Him! Alas! unhappy that I am! why am I thus overwhelmed? What shall I do, sweet Master, I who can no longer see nor touch Thee? What shall I do for Thy Mother, who will die of grief, and I shall not be able to help her? O God the Father! I commend to Thee

this most Holy Body, which Thou hast permitted to be thus outraged, and His sweet Mother, who has seen Him, with her own eyes, thus treated! And now we must needs go home without Him! Who will be able to bear this sorrow?"

And when the Magdalen arose and saw the tomb closed, she began again her weeping, so cruel and so bitter, that none could tell nor gauge it, and she said with loud cries: "Oh, wretched sinner! now am I deprived of every good! now have I lost all consolation! Whilst I could see the Body of my Master, and could touch Him with my hands, though He was dead, it seemed to me I still had something left; now my Lord is shut in the sepulchre with a stone, and I can neither see nor touch Him. Oh, mine eyes! weep till ye lose your light, so that I may see no other thing, now that I can never more behold the Body of my Master! And God grant that mine ears grow deaf and closed to all sound, since I can no longer hear my sweet Master's voice, who spake words of eternal life. Now whither shall I turn? Truly, Master, methinks I will stay here beside this sepulchre, until death come to me, or

maybe some one will take pity on me and bury me just here, so that neither living nor dead shall I ever depart from Thee."

Now the hour was growing late, and I think the Venerable Joseph went up to Madonna, and said: "Dearest Mother! see, the hour is late, and thou must remember that the Scribes and Pharisees will arrange that this Body be well guarded, and they will send hither some of Pilate's household, and perhaps even a great number, so that it would not be seemly for us to stay."

And the Mother said with a great cry! "Oh, dear Father Joseph! must I indeed go home without my Son? Must I leave him dead upon Mount Calvary? Oh, how I shall look for His coming to-night! And on what side shall I hear His sweet voice?"

And Joseph replied: "Dearest Mother! Thou dost know that we must needs come to this, and it is meet for us to do so."

And the Mother, full of humility and of most holy submission, replied: "And even thus will I do."

And she arose, and her kindred and the other women with her.

And when the Magdalen saw them rise, I think she said: "Now what would ye do?"

And they answered her: "See, the hour is late; we would go home."

Then the Magdalen wept and cried, as she had cried just now, saying: "Now to what home should we go without my Lord? Ah, misery! what words are these? Now see! although I cannot enter in with Him, I will stay here, outside, and never will I go hence, living nor dead. Do ye not know how little a time I knew Him, and how little I have been with Him! Ah, unhappy sinner! why did I delay so long to go to Him, for I could never see Him so much, but I was ever hungry to see Him more! What wilt thou do, thou sorrowful one, now that thou canst no longer see Him! Alas! they tell me to go home! What have I to do at home? Here lies my every good, here is the heart of my body, here is my Love, here is my Master, whom I love above all things, and nothing is left for me to care for, if not for Him! And if He should be stolen from me, indeed, His apostles and those other good people who followed Him would be to blame for

having left the Body of Christ alone upon Mount Calvary."

And I think that she turned to St. John the Evangelist, and said: "Oh, thou unhappy one! whither goest thou? Wilt thou leave this Body thus alone? Art thou afraid of death? or dost thou like better to live than to be near to Him? Must my Lord be left alone?"

Wherefore St. John wept so bitterly that he could not answer a word, and it seemed to him that she spoke reasonably.

And Our Lady was full of pity and tenderness for them, and I think she whispered in the ear of the Magdalen, and said: "My daughter, do not doubt that more than a thousand thousand angels will watch over Him to-night, and my Son would not have us stay."

And as soon as the Magdalen heard, her will was reconciled and obedient, for above all things she desired to do the will of her Master.

And she threw herself on the ground with a great cry, and she embraced the sepulchre as closely as she could, saying: "My sweet

Lord! it is not Thy will that I stay here, but I leave Thee my heart, so that I can feel no other desire; for I have no wish but to see Thee, to think of Thee, to speak of Thee, and with Thee to suffer in some way, and to bear pain all the time that I live, even if it be a thousand years, because of the pain I have seen Thee bear, my Lord."

And now she departed thence, and came to Our Lady, and the others came and they went straight to the Cross, where that precious Blood had been spent upon the ground, and still all the Cross was red with that Holy Blood. And when Our Lady had arrived before the Cross, she knelt down, and with sorrowful weeping she adored it, and she was the first to adore the Cross; then all the others threw themselves on the ground adoring the Holy Cross.

The Magdalen, who, I think, was a little behind Madonna, threw herself down with bitter weeping, and she cried: "Oh, most blessed Cross! would I had been in Thy stead, and that my Lord had been crucified in mine arms, my hands nailed against His, and that the lance which pierced His heart had passed even into mine, so that I had died with Him,

and thus neither in life nor death ever departed from Him."

But also I think she reproached herself, saying: "Oh, wretched sinner! what art thou saying? Oh, thou art not even worthy to watch this night by the tomb wherein His body is laid! How couldst thou be worthy then to approach thy frail flesh to that most pure body, the flower of all humanity! Oh, my Lord, forgive this sinner who is the cause wherefore Thou hast suffered thus!"

Now is it not a dolorous thought to think of that Mother, who loved Him so well, kneeling at the foot of the Cross whereon her sweet Son had died, and to think of that treasure, precious beyond all value, that is, the precious Blood drawn from His pure body, which knew no stain, thus shed upon the earth! I think that there were there three pools of Blood so great that they were a marvel to see, and only Our Lady knew of what they were the sign.

And the Magdalen, looking upon the Cross and that Blood, beat her breast and rent her garments, and I think that she said: "Dearest Mother, let us stay standing here this night,

to watch over this Blood, that it may not be trampled on, nor touched by any unclean thing."

And I think the Mother said: "Do not fear, my daughter; it will be well guarded."

And I think that Our Lady, full of wisdom, rose up, and, before any other, she first made the sign of the Cross, for she knew what ought to be done; and bending to the earth she said: "Earth, guard well my Son's Blood, for never yet was such a noble thing laid upon thee."

And so they departed. And the Magdalen made the sign of the holy Cross upon herself as she had seen her do. And, behold, they came towards the city. And I think the hour was late, and in the Life of the Kindred of Madonna it is related that they took her to stay with them, and that they covered her head with a black veil after the manner of widows. And I think that Our Lady said: "Ye do well, my sisters; I am indeed a widow, for the Sun of Justice is darkened, and the shadows are over all the world."

And this was true of those who had lost the faith, but not of her, for her faith re-

mained ever steadfast. And so they came to Mount Sion, to that house where the supper had taken place.

But truth to say, I would fain think that they went rather to the houses that belonged to the Magdalen, for thither it was that the Lord would ever abide when He was in Jerusalem, and hence His mother and those others returned there more willingly for love of Him.

And I think that when they had returned home they raised a sorrowful lament, and the Mother said sadly: "My Son, from whence shall I look for Thee to-night? Now will my life pass only in thinking of that which I have seen Thee do, in thinking of where I have left Thee, that is, Thy Body and Thy blessed Blood shed upon the ground. Oh, my sweet Son! human nature has cost Thee dear." And, moreover, she spoke of the compassion, the charity, and the pity that He had lavished upon our souls, and I think that many good women of the neighbourhood were drawn thither by this great piety.

But I think the Magdalen could not bear to be with them, rather she went swiftly to that room where her Master was accustomed

to stay when He came to lodge there, and she locked the door from within, and standing there she wept bitterly, and she prostrated herself, kissing the ground where she thought His feet had rested, and she laid there against her face and her hands; and she touched everything, and with bitter weeping she said: "Now I must needs believe that Thou wilt never more sleep in this bed, nor in this room. Now instead of Thee this thought is present with me. Oh, sorrowful my life!"

And she went hither and thither seeking those places where she had seen Him sit, and she said: "Here did I wash Thy feet, my Lord! Now must I think that I can no longer do Thee this service, for it was so great a consolation to me to touch Thy sweet feet! And now must I think of how I saw them fastened to the wood of the Cross with a great nail, and of how the Blood flowed therefrom on to the earth, and I could not have one drop of water with which to bathe them, although Thou didst create such abundance of water in the world, yet for Thee there was such a dearth thereof, my Lord. And not

one of Thy garments has been left me, for I saw them divided amongst knaves before Thy very eyes. Alas! would that I had that shirt which Thy Mother made for Thee with her needle, and I would have stained it with my own blood, so that it might have been mine for ever and ever, for love of Thee my Lord! What can I do, I, Mary, sad at heart? Where can I find Thee again, whither shall I go to seek Thee? I will seek Thee amongst the sufferings Thou hast endured, and henceforth I will transform me entirely! And this will I never forget."

And so she lay prone, and recalled to mind everything that she had seen or heard tell of that was done to Him; and when she thought of how they had stripped and scourged Him at the Pillar, I think that she unclothed herself and struck herself from head to foot with such fervour that the blood flowed to the ground. And I think this was as nothing to her, and she said: "Oh, my Lord! would that they were as cruelly eager for my blood as they were for Thine, even unto death! Now how can I bear to think that Thou wast scourged for my sins. Oh, my Lord! can

I ever wreak vengeance on me enough to satisfy me!"

And it seemed as if she would kill herself. Then I think Our Lady, inspired of God, sent to call her to come to her; and she instantly clothed herself and went.

Our Lady, ever wise, said: "My daughter, John desires that we should sup, and I also know that my Son would have it so, so that thou must show thyself obedient."

The Magdalen bowed her head, and she said, weeping: "Ah, woe is me! a bitter supper will this be, and very different from that which we saw yesterday! Alas! sweet Mother! what shall we do? and whither go? Ah, where have we left that holy Body, and to what have we come back?"

I think that the people had already departed, all save certain women who were more intimate and more devoted, and to these Madonna would fain give supper before they went away.

And I think this most humble Mother placed herself at the table, and that she did eat as much as was right, for she never left the path of wisdom, and thus she made

the others do likewise. Now I will say no more about the supper that night; every one can think what a night was this, and in what grief and sorrow it passed for each of them.

Now I desire to speak somewhat concerning Martha, of whom there has been no mention in this Passion of Messer Jesus; and there is mention of Mary Magdalen first, and after her of those Maries who were kindred of Madonna, that is, Mary the mother of James and Salome. It would have pleased me better had none others than these been recorded; but the *Passio* speaks of many other women, and yet says nought of Martha; and Martha was not so little in the sight of God incarnate, that, had she been there, she would have been amidst the multitude and not named separately. Certain I do not think it is to be believed that, had she been there, she would have been mentioned only amongst the rest, or like any other.

And it seems to me that our Lord Jesus Christ has given her honour and renown in His Church in two special things, that is, in the active Life of which she is made the chief and

the human example, so that she represents the active Life, without which it appears one cannot enter into eternal Life. Thus, Martha's life is one of the doors of eternal Life that is most used, and most of those who obtain Life pass thereby; few pass by the contemplative life. Few are those who in this life attain to contemplation. Very well then, the life of Martha and her works are one of the chief doors whereby one enters into eternal Life; and if this is so, how should she not be especially named as being with Christ in His Passion, when ye think how much is told of Mary?

Moreover, I discern another reason, and that is that, throughout the Church of God, Martha is called the Hostess of Christ, most excellent amongst all others in the world; and had she been present at the Passion, would not St. John the Evangelist, who was there, have named her, for he knew how great and pleasing she was in the eyes of Messer Jesus Christ. Yet if I say and think that she was not there, it seems to me a very strange thing; nevertheless I would rather say that she was not present, than say, "She was there, and treated thus

unworthily, there being no record of her presence."

Now, I will say what I think, and that is, that it being the will of Messer Jesus Christ to make Martha the head of the active life, and of diligence in the service of God and of one's neighbour, He wished that she should give the most perfect example that could be found, that is, in the exercise of the active life, wherewith I call to mind, how it is told here before, that Messer Jesus recommended the sick and poor to her, as He recommended His flocks to St. Peter. And when she heard this from His lips, she understood that this service would please Him more than any other thing that she could do. Moreover, many times had Martha heard Him say that whoever should serve the poor and sick for love of Him, would indeed minister unto His very person, and even so it is said in the Gospel: "Thou didst see Me naked, and didst not clothe Me; sick, and thou didst not visit Me."

Thus Martha wisely understood that this was the service that Messer Jesus desired from her, and this the charge He had laid upon her. Hence she set her heart to the doing perfectly

thereof, that she might do Him great pleasure. And therefore, I say, all her care was given to fulfil well this charge which He had given her, and which she saw was so pleasing to Him, that He put Himself in the place of whomsoever she served. Thus she knew that He was ever with her. And when she was ministering to the poor and sick, it seemed to her that she was tending Messer Jesus in His own person; and thus she kept the memory of Him continually with her.

And I think she said to herself: "To my sister is given one office, to myself another; let each of us strive to do her part perfectly. And we must admit that hers may be the better and the greater, because He esteems it best; wherefore my heart and soul rejoice, and I desire to hold in great veneration that task which He has given me, although it be the less; and certain I am that He has done me no injury, rather through His great charity has He given it me; and verily we are blest, my sister and I, that we can do something that will please Him."

Now thus think I of Martha.

Behold, Messer Jesus said that He would go

to keep the Passover in Jerusalem with His disciples; and immediately His Mother, and the Magdalen, and the other Maries, said that they would fain go with Him to Jerusalem, and be present at this supper, if in some way they might do so, and Martha instantly thought to go with them.

But afterwards she called to mind how, on that day and the day before, there had come under her care some who were more stricken with poverty and sickness than any that had ever come to her house, and they came from yet farther away, for the fame of the resurrection of Lazarus, and of the many other miracles that the good Jesus had wrought, was very great, so that whoever was in want took no heed that the way was long, but came to the supreme Physician to be healed. So I think that when Martha saw all these who were in such great necessity, she thought to herself, and said: "Although it would delight me more than any other thing to go keep the Passover with my Father and Master, nevertheless my desire is to be pleased by that which pleases Him." And I think she knelt before Him, and said, "Messer, I had thought to come to Jerusalem

and keep the Passover with these others; but now I see that many sick have come to us in great numbers and from far distant places, and they are in need of much help, I would fain know, if thou wilt tell me, which most would please Thee, that I should come, or that I should stay?"

I think that the Lord said: "It is My will that thou shouldst stay and minister to these cruel infirmities, and that thou shouldst not depart hence until I send to tell thee."

Now we have found the reason why Martha was not present at the Passion; it was because Messer Jesus did not wish it so.

And I think He did not permit her to come, that she might give a perfect example to those whose calling it is to tend the sick and poor, so that they should never leave their work negligently; and so much did this work please Him that He preached a special gospel thereon. And thus He desired that Martha, whom He made the head of the active life, should not leave the poor sick, to follow Him, as did His Mother, through this time of the Passion. Well indeed can we discern how greatly this charity to our neighbour pleases Him; and



Neurdein Photo.

THE MAGDALEN

After the painting by Carracci in the Louvre

yet again can we see how greatly, when He said: "Whatsoever ye do unto one of the least of these, thus ye do unto Me."

And I think He said unto Martha: "If thou didst see Me as ill as these who are lying here, and in such great need, think what thou wouldst do unto Me, and even so do unto them."

I think this also of Messer Jesus and of His mercy, that if Martha had not been able at that time to minister to the poor sick, He would have left there the Magdalen in her stead. Nor does this seem to me hard of belief; for we know that the holy souls, however perfectly they may be contemplative, sometimes leave their meditations because of their neighbour's need. And in the Lives of the Holy Fathers, I have read of a Holy Abbot, who coming to the city to sell his baskets, found a poor forsaken sick man, and he lifted him up, and carried him to some place where he served him for six months, and for love of his neighbour he left his tranquillity and solitude. And this I tell to demonstrate that to all those who have given themselves to the active life, that is, to serve the poor and sick, Messer Jesus would

show forth in the person of Martha, whom He had elected to be the example of the active life, how greatly He delighted in that pity and solicitude which is due to the poor and sick; for not only those who are in the world should act thus, but those also who are wrapt in mystical communion should condescend to the necessity of their neighbour. Now Messer Jesus could have healed all those people, and released Martha, so that she might have gone with Him, but He would not, for this was a greater example to those who are called for love of Him to minister to the sick and poor.

The good Jesus knew that had Martha gone with Him she could not therefore have lessened His pain, for He would not have it so. What could His Mother or the Magdalen do for Him? They could do Him no service, rather they added pain to His pain, for He had compassion on their sorrow. I think therefore it was His will to give a true example to whosoever is called to this duty till the world's end, of the office of neighbourly charity which is so needful and of so great use, and with which He had charged Martha, wishful that she should be the chief founder thereof; and if

He desired that she should give up the consolation of going with Him, through charity and because of her neighbour's necessity, so, likewise, should he do, who is called to do like work.

Now I say that it better pleases me to think that Martha stayed at home for this reason, and that it was the Lord's will that she should not be present at the Passion, than to think that she was there, and that there was no word thereof. I cannot think that the Hostess of the Lord and she who loved Him so well, was at the Passion, and that none should record it; for the *Passio* makes mention of many women, who were present at the Passion, and I cannot think that this woman, so excellent amongst all others, should not have been named. And it would seem little to the honour of God that this woman should not be specially mentioned many and many a time; for I think that save His Mother and the Magdalen, St. Martha loved Messer Jesus more than any other woman that ever was. I, for my part, can no way believe that she was there, as there is no record of her presence.

Now what shall we say?

Believing thus concerning this matter, shall we therefore say that she was not with them in their mourning before Messer Jesus Christ arose? On the contrary, we say that she was there, and I think that it befell in this way, and about this I have no doubts; still I do not alter the truth as I have said elsewhere. I delight me in thinking that it may have been thus, or thus, but I do not assert it.

Now I think that on the evening of that Thursday when the Lord went to sup in Jerusalem, Martha and Lazarus received tidings of Him; for I think that some of the household returned that same evening, of those who had followed the Magdalen lest anything should be needed, and also to bring tidings of Messer Jesus to Martha and Lazarus, who ever feared greatly for Him, because they knew the edict that had gone forth against Him. So they came back in the evening to say that all was well, and that the Magdalen was glad and well content, for Messer Jesus had gone out of the city late that evening without let or hindrance. Therefore they took comfort, and they thought that these sorrows could not be so near, since He had escaped this time. Now it befell that

Messer Jesus was taken, and then followed all the sequence of the Passion as it is told above.

I think that that night when the Magdalen heard that He was taken, she had straightway thought to send to tell Martha and Lazarus, but when she heard from St. John how all was going against Him, she was filled with such grief that she had room for no other thought nor recollection; all else forsook her heart and mind. And, moreover, I think that all the household and friends were so eager to hear of this matter, and what might be the issue thereof, that none remembered to send thither; and also I think that Messer Jesus did not desire them to send.

Now I think that evening when Messer Jesus had been laid to rest in the tomb, and the women had returned, night had already fallen. Moreover, I think that some of those seventy-two disciples who had lain hidden all day, now left the city for greater safety; and because they were very intimate with Lazarus and all that family, I think that they went to Bethany to their house, and I should wonder greatly if some of the twelve did not hie them thither likewise. And arriving at the house far into

the night, when they saw Lazarus they began to strike their faces, and rend their garments, and tear their hair with such violence that they could scarcely speak, for they would fain give vent to their sorrow; for from fear they had controlled themselves in the city, and they had not dared to utter their grief.

Lazarus, seeing them act thus, straightway thought that Messer Jesus was taken, and full of dismay, he said to them: "What has happened to the Master?" And they could scarcely reply, saying that He was dead.

Then Lazarus, when he heard this, did as they did, and even more, and it seemed as if he would kill himself beyond remedy.

Martha and Martilla, who I think were praying or ministering to the sick, hearing this noise, ran thither towards the sound of lamentation, crying: "What is it? what is it?" And when they heard this word, that Messer Jesus was dead, I think their grief was so great and so cruel that it took from them all force of body and mind, and they fell swooning to to the ground, as if dead and frozen and turned to clay. And he who considers the boundless good they owed to His person will

not marvel thereat; and yesterday they had been of good cheer, and to-day they had known nothing different, and this evening they receive this sudden stab in the heart. Indeed, it seems to me greater marvel that life was still left to them.

And Lazarus grieved so sorely for his Master that he had no thought for his sister, nor care for any other thing, but he said: "Why did I not go with Him? Maybe in some way I might have helped Him! Ah, woe is me! for ever and ever! Was I afraid of death when I was with Him who gives life to the dead, and I myself have experienced it? Ah, unhappy that I am! what will my life be without Him? What shall I do with my life, now that my Master is dead?"

And thus he gave vent to such dolorous weeping and such great lamentation that none could tell it; and those who had come thither did likewise, and all the household united with them in bitter weeping.

And when they saw Martha and Martilla thus overwhelmed they sought to fortify them, that they might revive, but they could not.

Also I think that some of the household went amongst the poor sick, saying: "We are all lost, for the Master is dead, and Martha and Martilla have fallen down dead for grief, and we cannot revive them."

Then I think the poor and sick lifted such great lamentation that it seemed as if it would echo to the skies, and they wept for Messer Jesus because they looked for His coming, thinking to be healed and cured by Him, and they wept for Martha, for if she were dead they thought they were indeed abandoned.

I think that God took pity on these sick people, and it was His will that Martha and Martilla should revive; and Martha arose, and she tore her hair, and rent her raiment, and she besought them to tell her how her Master had died. And I think they replied: "Do not make us tell thee, for thou couldst not bear it, nor endure thy life."

And she replied: "Ah, but death is what I desire! death is what I seek! What should I do with my life, now that my Master is dead?"

And likewise Lazarus, I think, desired to hear what had befallen.

And they replied with many tears: "You

see we do not know everything that happened for we were all in hiding, and none of us were with Him, nor any of His apostles, save John the Evangelist, who they say never forsook Him, neither he nor His Mother."

I think that Martha and Lazarus redoubled their weeping at these words, and they said: "Alas! my Lord, abandoned by Thy disciples! What thing is this we hear? Oh, were ye then willing to live without Him? Why did ye not go to die with Him?"

And this seemed so dire a thing to Martha and Lazarus that they could not bear to think thereon; and they questioned further, and these others replied: "We know that He was condemned to be crucified by the voice of the people; and so He was crucified on Mount Calvary between two thieves, and then laid in the sepulchre."

Whilst they uttered these words I think that the weeping and wailing were very great, for Martha and Lazarus and Martilla were consumed with grief, and they rent their garments, and seemed like to die, but they could not die, for they would fain hear all, and yet what they heard seemed to them so

horrible a thing that they could not bear it, and they wept so sorely that all those in the house wept with them bitterly, and not only the people but the very stones seemed to lament.

Now how untoward a change was over this house! How much joy and spiritual consolation did once abide therein! Now how overshadowed was the light of Martha's house! Ah, how many times had it given shelter to the Sun of Justice and to the Lord of all Virtue, and while He was therein it seemed a Paradise! And I think that Martha said these same words, weeping bitterly; and moreover she said: "Alas, my Lord! I used to say to my sick people, 'Comfort ye, and bear yourselves patiently, for our Master will come back and will heal ye all.' From what side can I expect Thy coming now, my Lord? Oh, where shall I seek Thee? Oh, when shall I hear that most holy word which was said to me, 'Behold thy Master, who comes to sup with thee,' wherefore my happiness was such that it seemed to me I was in Paradise! Oh, sorrowful is my soul, that I was not worthy to be with thee in such sorrow and degradation, O my Mother!"

And the night was passed in uttering such words as these, and each of them had so much to bewail.

And I think Martha said to Lazarus: "See and consider how we may go to Jerusalem to see our Lord's Mother, thus overshadowed with sorrows, and to hear of all that was done or said to Him, and, if it please God, we will die there of grief, and God grant that it may happen so. I know not why we should desire to live."

And Martha cried: "Alas, my Lord! Thou didst say to me, 'Do not come until I send for thee.' Oh, dolorous one! now must I needs think of this commandment now that I have lost my Lord and Master! Now am I deprived of every good! Oh, my Lord! why didst Thou not send for me? Why didst Thou not wish me to be with Thee? Thou knewest well that I loved Thee above all things, and that I cannot live without Thee! I will go to Thy sweet Mother to know if Thou didst say nothing of me Thine handmaid, and I will die with her, for with this sorrow she surely cannot live."

And saying these words she wept so griev-

ously that her eyes seemed two rivers of tears. And I think that Lazarus said : " See, Martha, we will go to Jerusalem, and we will go so early that we may enter the city before dawn, for as thou knowest the festival is great, and we cannot go abroad during the day of the feast, and we will stay within doors with our Mother."

And Martha agreed that they should do thus. And I think she arose, but she did not forget the poor, and she and Martilla went to them ; and when they saw her weeping they renewed their lamentations loudly, and she said : " My children ! now is our hope gone and our joy grown less. I am going to Jerusalem to-morrow morning, but I will arrange that ye be well served and well aided until my return, and if I do not return, everything here shall be yours."

And she arranged all that was to be done, as one who did not forget the words the good Jesus had spoken to her. And I think that these poor sick people prayed her to take comfort and to moderate her sorrow, so that she should not die of grief. I think Martha recommended them to the care of certain good



Alinari Photo.

THE MAGDALEN

After the painting by Titian at Florence

and holy women of that neighbourhood who dwelt near, and who oftentimes came thither to help her to tend them, and when she had well arranged all things, she returned to Lazarus and said it was time to go. And I think that those who had come with the tidings stayed there to watch over the poor. And Martha and Lazarus and Martilla started with some of the household.

And behold, with many tears and great grief of heart, they came to the city before daybreak, and they went there where was the Mother of our Lord, and knocking at the door they went in, and began so great a lamentation, with such great grief that it seemed as if their hearts were breaking.

When Our Lady heard this weeping, she came out of her room, inspired by God, and I think that Martha straightway threw herself at her feet with so great a cry that it seemed to reach to the skies; and thus also did Lazarus and Martilla.

And I think that Peter had already come thither to Madonna, and some of the others also, and they had given vent to great anguish, and now they renewed their weeping with these others.

And I think the Magdalen was farther away, as one who hid from the crowd, for she would fain not be distracted from the thought of Messer Jesus dead and martyred. I think that some of the household went to her and told her that Lazarus and Martha had come, and some of the apostles, and she replied immediately: "At a fine time have they come, and fine help have they given to their Lord and mine!"

And I think that there arose in her a great indignation against them, because they had so shamefully fled away, and she came towards them with bitter weeping, and said to her brother and sister: "Oh, unhappy brother and sister! how could ye be so vile, and so mean, that ye did not come to die with my Master? Did ye fear for this corporal life? What will ye do with your lives now? Why would ye not rather die with Him? And thou, Lazarus, thou knowest that He raised thee from the dead. Now how wilt thou know how to live without Him?" And she turned to Martha, and said: "And thou, my unhappy sister, thou hast spent thyself in virtuous works, and the Lord of Virtue is dead, and thou wast not with Him, nor didst thou see the way they tortured

Him, so that thou might die with Him!" And she cried: "Ah, woe is me! for I saw Him, and I die living, and I cannot die."

Martha and Lazarus wept so bitterly that they could not answer a word, and Mary Magdalen wept even more than they did, and it seemed that the mourning would begin again.

And I think that Our Lady, full of tenderness, sat down on the ground, and signed to them to sit round her; and thus they did. I think that her compassion and grief were so great, that she could not yet speak to them. I think she let them give vent to their tears for a little, and I think at this moment the weeping was greater than at any other time, for there were there some of those who had fallen, and they had a double reason for tears —one for the Lord whom they had loved so well, when they heard tell of how He had been tortured, and also for themselves, because they had left Him so shamefully and so vilely. And St. Peter wept in such a way that the skin of his face peeled away, and he said: "Alas! sorrowful that I am! Would that heaven and earth would wreak vengeance on me, a wretched sinner! The others fled, and I fol-

lowed Him to the hall of the chief priest, there where He was struck, and in His sight I denied Him three times at the question of a woman! Thus am I betrayed by myself! Who can ever give me consolation? Rather may grief and sorrow be my nourishment throughout all the days of my life."

When the others discerned and heard these words, of how Peter had so shamefully denied Him, they wept again and again, and the Magdalen's grief grew yet greater, and weeping, she said: "Oh, my sweet Master! this I did not know! I knew, indeed, and saw that all had forsaken Thee, but that they should have denied Thee, I would never have believed!"

And then she gave way to wrath, and she said: "Mayst thou be scorned and ever reproached until the end of the world!"

And then she turned against her brother, nor could she believe that he had not known it from any one, and she held him in great scorn, because she thought he had forsaken Him through fear of death. Alas! what great piety moved these people! for there was none among them who excused himself, but he who comprehended best, wept for his fault, and the

more he seemed to himself to merit reproof, and none would hear or think of excuses for himself. Ah, good God! how well Thou dost know how to instruct Thine own! The more that those of a good heart, and contrite and humble, accused themselves, the more were they excused in Thy sight. Certain they were not wroth that a woman should reproach them with their sin, rather they wondered that the earth did not open to swallow them up alive, and they were humiliated, because the women had been firm and constant to Jesus in His Passion, with no fear of death, rather they were ready to die with Him, than to fly for fear of death.

I think that Our Lady having permitted them to dispute much and relieve the pain of their hearts, now at these words made sign to them to be silent and to listen to her; and I think she spoke to them a most beautiful discourse, comforting them and leading them back to faith and hope, telling them that her blessed Son's death was to give life, and that it was not like the death of the rulers of the world, who when they fall in battle, ruin their servants, and whose friends are defeated, nor

can ever be helped by them. "But believe me, my children, it is not thus with my Son, rather, on the contrary, in dying He has conquered death, and all His enemies; He has gained the victory, and being victorious, He frees all men from death and prison, and now the road to the kingdom of heaven is found, which was lost by our first parents, and already the Gate of our City is opened, and it was opened when my Son's heart was pierced, and the payment of this price was accomplished—that is, when the Blood that had been left in His heart flowed, then the door of heaven was opened. And do not think these empty words, my children, for ere long ye will discern and know the truth thereof."

And these words and many others most beautiful did she speak concerning this truth, so that I think their hearts burned within them, as when they heard tell of Messer Jesus; and I think they threw themselves upon the ground round her, and kissed the ground near her feet, crying: "Madonna, we discern and understand that thy Son speaks by thy lips. Dearest Mother, help of our frailty and support of our souls, command us according to thy

will, for we see clearly that thou art the spouse of the Holy Spirit, and that thou knowest all the truth concerning thy Son, and thou hast comforted our hearts; therefore command us as thou wilt."

I think Our Lady, full of tenderness, replied to them: "Go, my children! watch and pray so that temptations do not overtake you, and steadfastly look for the resurrection of my Son and your Master; for heaven and earth pass away, but His words will never pass away."

And she gave them her blessing, and each one arose, and went away to pray alone in some part of the house; wherefore Mary Magdalen said to herself: "What wilt thou do? Wilt thou unite with Martha and Lazarus? Nay! I think not;" rather she rose and fled to her little room, and locked herself in, for she had no other desire save to think of Messer Jesus, to weep and to grieve for Him. Her mind was not yet free, but her thoughts were ever dwelling on the wounds and hurts of her Master, for she had left her heart in His tomb.

And I think that when Martha saw her sister go she was much dismayed, for she had thought

to grieve together with her for a little ; but she found balm for her wound, for she turned to Madonna, and said : "Dearest Mother, let me come with thee that I may see thee for a little, for thou art all that is left to me ; I will stay beside thee, and I will not move."

I think that the Mother granted her this grace, and so they went to a room where each of them was wrapt in prayer ; and I think that when they went to pray was on Saturday morning about the hour of tierce. I think that other good and holy women were there to look to the preparation of the dinner.

Ah, what a sorrowful Saturday was this! They stayed with the outer door closed fast, and while outside all the people were keeping the festival and making a great stir, they were weeping and sighing more than I could say.

And when the dinner was ready they told her who never evaded the occasion to show true wisdom both for herself and for the others, especially during this time while the Master of Truth was hidden from their eyes. His Mother was the mistress and example of all piety, for her piety was born of true charity, and she had no need of being cosseted like other women

when they have great sorrow, but she looked after the others and ministered to them, for she had learnt from Him who said: "I have not come to be served, but to serve." And therefore I think that she immediately came forth and sent for the others; and two tables being spread she bade the men go sit at one, and she with the other women went to the other, and when their hands were washed and the blessing of the tables said, they sat down. And I think that she placed herself between Mary Magdalen and Martha, with all the other women round; and all who were there looked at her with pious devotion and marvelled much, that, being in such sorrow, she could thus govern and master herself, so that every one was edified at the sight of such fortitude in her, and it seemed to them almost as if they were with Messer Jesus when they were with her. Never had they known her so well, for never had she thus revealed herself, as hitherto there had been no need; and piety and love seemed to come to them from seeing her so bravely bear herself, so that they were nourished with tears more than with bread. And I think that Our Lady invited them to

take food, praying each of them with gentle courtesy to eat as much as was necessary. And I think that they all endeavoured to obey her, though we must own that it was hard for them to eat in such sorrow; but yet they forced themselves to do as she did, for she was left to them for an example, and to give them great help, for which they ever looked to her hands.

Oh! Lord God! what food was this! And how much benefit a soul might derive from devoutly pondering thereon!

And I think that when they had eaten and had given thanks, Our Lady rose and humbly sat down on the ground amongst them, and she began to utter another beautiful and most true discourse, and she explained to them all the prophecies that had been foretold concerning her Son—first of His advent clothed in our flesh, and then of His virtuous life, and of all the notable deeds He had done, and she showed how that which should be understood from the Prophets was in accordance therewith, and so on till His most holy death, and she showed them how the Prophets had foretold all word for word.

And whilst she spoke thus lovingly, as we

have said before, they felt their hearts burn at her words; and Our Lady led them back to hope, saying to them: "Remember what my Son said to you, how you would have sorrow and pain, and the world would rejoice; and He promised you that your sorrow should be turned to joy, and that none could take that joy from you."

And I think that when they heard these sweet words, their minds were illuminated, and they remembered these words, but as yet all hope of remedy had come to nothing.

And Our Lady knew it well, and she sought to lead them into the way of truth. And I think that she said: "Peter, dost thou not remember that thou didst say He was Christ, the Son of God, who had come into the world, and thou didst speak truly! What then dost thou fear? And thou, Martha, thou didst say likewise, and thou didst speak truly! And thou, Lazarus, dost thou not remember what thou didst hear from the Holy Fathers when thou wast in Limbo? Now what are ye afraid of, my children? Do ye fear lest the light of this truth should be quenched? Nay! brighter than ever, ye will find it again, with greater

comprehension, which can never be taken from you by all the suffering and all the tyrants of the world, nor could any human force or power add to your joy or diminish it by the point of a needle."

And when Our Lady spoke thus they were all enlightened, and their faith and hope were confirmed, and they called to mind all the words that they had heard Him say; but not for this did their grief for His Passion cease; rather it increased, for they understood better that He had suffered the pain for their sins, and not for His.

I think she said to the Magdalen: "My daughter, dost thou not remember how He said to thee that thou hadst chosen the better part which shall never be taken from thee? And if it cannot be taken from thee, what dost thou fear?"

Ah, me! how beautiful was the answer that I think she made, saying: "I tell thee, dearest Mother, I do not think that I grieve for myself, or for what may be taken or not taken from me, but I grieve only for the pain I have seen Him bear to give me this better part, and so that it may never be taken

from me; indeed, He has shown forth His goodness."

I think that Our Lady, seeing that she knew the Truth so well, blessed her; and I think Our Lady said it was time each one returned to prayer. And thus they did straightway. And I think Martha went with Madonna. Magdalen would not go with her, so that, in thinking of her Master, her memories might be only for herself. And each of the others was alone, and they called to mind the words He had said, and thus faith and hope ever grew stronger in them.

And I think that Our Lady, ever full of wisdom, had bidden St. John make shift to go to the rest of his brethren, and that he should send to tell those, who had not come that morning, to come to her in the evening after nightfall. And I think she grieved sorely over those sheep thus gone astray, for fear lest they should leave the faith, and therefore she sought to speak with them.

I think, moreover, that she called Martha, and spoke many beautiful words to her, to confirm her in her faith, so that she should surely stand firm, and steadfastly await the

resurrection of the blessed Son of God. And she said: "My daughter, stand firm in the faith, for all the consolations that thou hast received from the Son of God are as nothing compared with those thou wilt yet receive; and believe these words with certainty, for assuredly do we look for the resurrection of the Son of God; and soon thou shalt see the truth of my words. And I desire, my daughter, that thou shouldst return to Bethany to serve my Son, as He bade thee, that is, His poor and His sick, and believe, as He told thee, that thou dost minister to His own person; and console them and thyself, for in a little while thou shalt be comforted. And know, my daughter, that my Son will yet do great things; therefore be constant in His faith and love; watch and pray, that temptation may not overtake thee, and comfort those disciples thou didst leave behind thee, and repeat to them the words thou hast heard me say; bid them be diligent in seeking for their brethren, and tell them that they will soon see my Son come with victory, and He will bring great gladness to their hearts."

I think that Martha knelt at her feet, and

said: "Sweetest Mother, I am ready to obey thee in all things, for already I feel my soul comforted by thy words, as I did when the Master spoke to me, and therefore I confidently hope that all will come about as thou sayest. I beseech thee to speak these same words to Lazarus and Martilla, that they may be strengthened in their hope and faith." And even so it was done. Our Lady straightway sent for them, and comforted them so well that no doubt remained to them. And so she desired that at nightfall they should all three return to Bethany; and they reverently asked her blessing, and they gently prayed her to recommend them to her Master when she saw Him, and that she would ask Him to grant them the grace of seeing Him. I think Our Lady promised this, and, giving them her blessing, she sent them thence in peace. And I think they desired to speak with the Magdalen before they went. But this did not take place, for they feared to interrupt her thoughts, and they said: "Let that which Madonna has said be enough." And thus did they.

So I think that these three went to Bethany well comforted, and that being there they be-

gan to restore the light of faith to all those who had had it, and it seemed to be by divine intervention that all took comfort at their words, and thus they renewed the light of faith which had been quenched.

Now let us return to the Magdalen. I think that when she saw it was already night, she called to mind how in the morning she would fain go to anoint the Body of her Master in the tomb, and that she had not much ointment; and I think she sent to a good man whom she had made her dispenser to the poor, when they had sold their possessions, and she sent to him bidding him bring her those spices and those things that she needed to make the ointment, and she bade him choose the most precious that could be found in the city; and so it was done. And when he brought these things, she took them, and went to Madonna, and knelt at her feet with great reverence, and said: "Dearest Mother, thou knowest that my Master bade me anoint His Body in the sepulchre, and yesterday evening it was not possible, for I had so little that it was as good as nothing; if it be thy will, I will make a great deal thereof, so that to-

morrow before daybreak I can go to anoint His Body in the tomb."

And Our Lady, who knew what ought to be done, and who knew that the Magdalen did well to remember this ointment, and that the memory of this woman is preached throughout all the world, said to her: "Go, my daughter, and call my kindred to help thee, and make it very excellent, and to-morrow morning go thither very early as thou hast said."

And I think that the Magdalen asked her blessing, and, arising, she called two women, kindred of Madonna, and they went together to make this ointment.

Now what must it have been to them to see this ointment made! And what a pitiful thing to think of the tears they shed while making it, and how they recalled all the pain and humiliation and dishonour that they had seen inflicted on their Master! And the Magdalen would listen to nought else, for at that time she could think of nought else. And from time to time she said, with great sighs from her heart: "Oh, sorrowful Mary! when I used to prepare ointments to anoint my Master, I did

it with eagerness, for I thought they would be useful to support and help Him in His bodily life; and now, my Lord, I go to anoint Thy dead Body. Now how can I bear the life in mine own body when mine eyes behold Thine dead? But I think my heart is of stone, for it cannot die; had I heard tell when Thou wast alive of all those things that I have seen done to Thee, I should have thought that only in thinking thereon my heart would have broken. Now I have seen all with mine eyes, and yet I cannot die."

And at this she broke into such dolorous weeping that she was utterly consumed, and these other women who were with her redoubled their lamentation to see her weeping so sorrowfully and so piteously. And when the ointment was made, they arranged together how they should go before daybreak to Mount Calvary, there where was the tomb, and this done, each went back to her room to pray.

But the Magdalen did not sleep at all that night, and yet she had watched all the night before, but she set herself to recall from the beginning and to think again all those things

that had been said and done to her Master, and over each one she wept and grieved, and she lacerated herself with the discipline and with stripes until the blood flowed in great abundance, and she said to herself with great vehemence: "It was not the Jews who did this to my Master; rather it was thy sins, thou brazen sinner, for they could have done nothing, had it not been His will to save thy soul from the hell thou hast deserved more than a thousand times."

And this she resolved, that no day should pass that she did not call to mind the whole of the Passion as it had happened. And thus she took vengeance on her body inasmuch as she was able, and that which she did seemed as nothing compared with her great longing to suffer pain when she thought of her Master's sufferings, and of how He had borne them for her, and had she died a thousand deaths, could she have risen again so often, it would not have seemed too much. And I think that the Magdalen did not cease this dolorous lamentation, but rather she spent the greater part of the night in thinking over again all that had happened to Him.

Now here shall be set forth a beautiful meditation of how He appeared to Our Lady, and this is it:—When our Lord had despoiled Limbo and led away the holy souls to the Paradise of delights, where there was great glory and happiness, He said to them with joy: "My brothers, it is now time that I take again my Body and revive it, for I promised my disciples to rise from the dead upon the third day, and, as ye see, it is already near dawn, so that I would go now. And she who has suffered such anguish from my death is calling Me, and she awaits Me with such longing to see Me with that Body glorified which was born of hers; thus it is time now to go and comfort her for the grief she has suffered."

At these words Messer Adam and Madonna Eve, and all the Holy Fathers and holy souls that He had brought out of Limbo, knelt before Him, and cried with one voice: "Messer, we beseech Thee through Thine infinite goodness and kindness that Thou wouldst take us with Thee to see the world of Thy glory and of Thy resurrection, and to look upon that Body which has fought for

us and received the stripes of our sins. And we long with all our hearts to see Thy Mother who has given for us the Blessed Fruit of her womb."

And the benign Lord granted their petition, and He came with all the angels and all those Holy Fathers. And He went first and the others followed round about with great rejoicing, and new songs which had never been heard before, for never before had there been a new wonder so great as this, whence we may think that God the Father had given to His angels and to us new songs and glory for honour of His Son, who had so victoriously run the course of this mortal life. And the angels taught it to those Holy Fathers, and thus they proceeded gloriously to Mount Calvary, and when they had arrived in glory at the sepulchre, Messer Jesus took again His Body before all this multitude of angels and saints, and once again they looked upon the world on the morn of His resurrection, according to His pleasure. And when those Holy Fathers saw the Body of Messer Jesus thus gloriously raised from the dead, and when they saw that new wonder of those

wounds more resplendent than the sun, they threw themselves upon the ground with such reverence and love and gratitude as no soul could gauge. Ah me! who can imagine the joy of those Holy Fathers when they saw this Flesh of our flesh thus exalted! To me, it is better far to ponder and think upon this matter, than to utter it in words.

And Messer Jesus having tarried awhile with them in that place, said: "Now let us go and make My Mother happy, who with most gentle tears is calling upon Me."

And John the Baptist, who was near beside Him, kissed that glorified Body, and said with gladness: "Let us go, Messer. Now shall I have the superabundant joy of seeing Thy Mother and mine, of seeing Thee together with her."

And they went forthwith, and came to the room where Our Lady was praying, and with gentle tears asking God to give her back her Son, saying that it was the third day. And as she stayed thus, Messer Jesus drew near to her on one side, and said: "Peace and cheerfulness be with thee, holy Mother."

And straightway she recognised the voice of

her blessed Son, and opened her eyes, and beheld Him thus glorious, and threw herself down wholly on the ground, and worshipped Him, and the Lord Jesus knelt Himself down like her; and then they rose to their feet and embraced one another most sweetly, and gave each other peace, and then went and sat together. And the sweet Mother gazed at Him joyfully, and she looked at Him, and touched Him, and especially did she look at the wounds and scars He had received upon His Body.

And the Lord said to her: "Comfort thee, sweet Mother, for I have vanquished death, and all power of suffering has left Me."

And while they were thus together, the Lord, desiring to give her every consolation, began to tell of how He had gone to Limbo, and of all the great things He had done for the holy souls, and how He had led them to the Paradise of delights, and how He had taken them to see His resurrection; and moreover, He said: "I have brought them to thee, sweet Mother, thus to give greater consolation to both thee and them."

And then by a new and great grace, her eyes were opened to see the immortal spirits

and the holy and glorious angels, to hear and to comprehend their melody; and so Our Lady was all at once endowed with one of those gifts that the souls possess in eternal life, and that is, to recognise each one of those Fathers separately and by name, as if she had seen and known them in the world.

And this does not seem to me hard to believe, for Peter and John and James, when they were on the mountain where He was transfigured, beheld His face as the sun, and His garments as white as snow, wherefore it is evident that these disciples had a new grace of sight over and above what was usual, for they could look upon and endure the glory of the Son of God; and also they recognised Moses and Elias whom they had never seen.

What then shall we say of His Mother? I can well believe that He would grant her far greater graces than to these, in this and in other things; wherefore, for my part, I am blythe to think that she had this overwhelming consolation of sight and understanding, just as she was; but I do not affirm it, because, for all I know, it is not to be found so in the Scriptures; but I delight to think that she should

receive full consolation from her blessed Son, and from all those who were His own, and especially at that time, when she had borne so many and such heavy sufferings.

Now I think that, when she could see these happy souls, she perceived St. John the Baptist upon his knees, pressing up to her, and touching her with such gladness as none could tell.

And behold, Messer Adam came and knelt before her Son, and before herself, and he said: "My most dear daughter, thou art blessed not only above all women, but above all generations begotten of me, and above all the virtues of heaven, for through the Blessed Fruit of thy womb, human and angelic nature accomplishes that which was needful."

And thus, I think, came Madonna Eve, and said: "My daughter, be thou blessed with every blessing that falls upon creatures; for that which I marred through vanity, thou hast repaired through humility and charity."

And so I think that all the Holy Patriarchs and Prophets approached, and each one, with deep reverence, praised and blessed her, and the other holy souls did likewise, and they

began to shout for joy, and to sing those verses and prophesies that they had foretold concerning her when they had been mortal in this world, and many others of great joy.

Oh! how sweet it seems, that Madonna should have this joy and gladness after so many sorrows, and that she should see her Son thus glorious, and the joy of the angels who were looking forward to beholding the seats of heaven filled with eternal life; and that she should see the happiness of the saints, who saw the Son of God, clothed in our flesh, both man and God, and who saw themselves freed from prison, and were awaiting to go with Him to the glory of eternal life, certain that never more would any hurtful or sorrowful thing be able to touch them.

AMEN.

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